SPECIAL ISSUE! **1998 IN REVIEW!**

THE RING

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"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"®

FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.

The Ring's Fighter Of The Year

ALSO:

- VARGAS
- PAGE
- ESPINOSA
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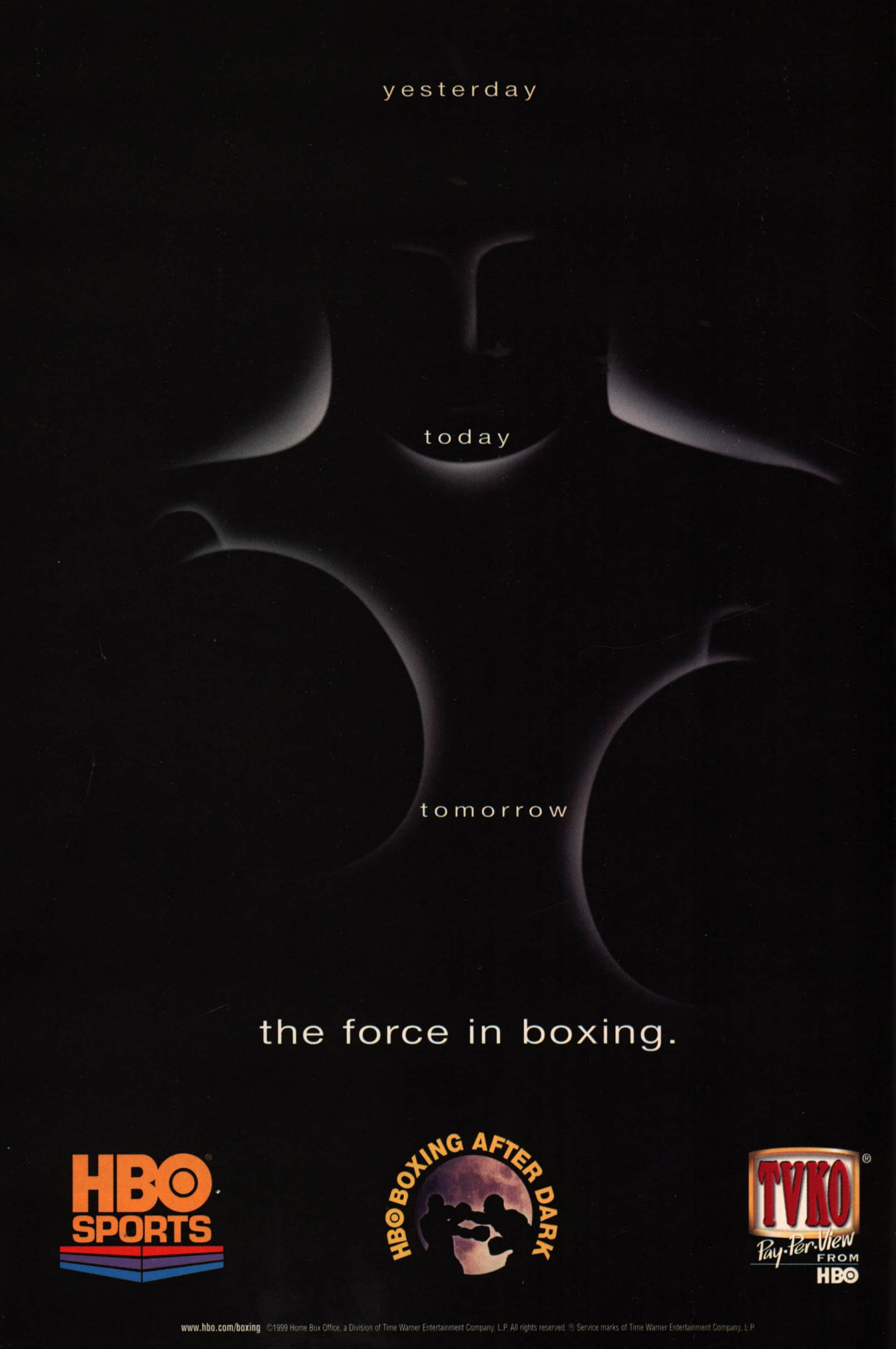

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CONTENTS

April 1999

FEATURES

19 **FIGHTER OF THE YEAR: FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.**
"He's So Good, It's Scary"
By Nigel Collins

22 **JAMES PAGE**
In The Blink Of An Eye, He Becomes A Welterweight Force
By Joe Santoliquito

24 **FERNANDO VARGAS**
"He's Gonna Make People Forget About" ... Oscar Who?
By Eric Raskin

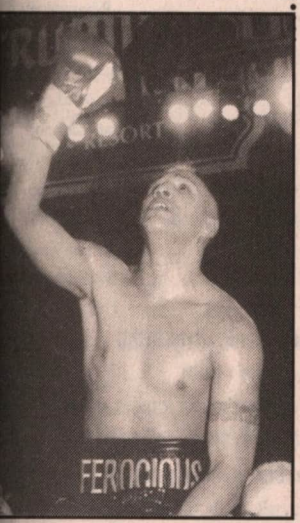
28 **CHAMELEON TO ONE!**
Versatile Espinosa Defies The Odds And Extends His Reign
By William Dettloff

30 **ROBINSON-GATTI II**
"Mighty" Ivan Does It Again ... And Looks To Something Sweeter
By Nigel Collins

34 **THE RING UPDATE: CARLOS ORTIZ**
"I Can Still Taste The Championship On My Lips"
By Brian Doogan

38 **REMEMBERING KAYO KING ARCHIE MOORE**
His Wisdom Went Beyond The Ring
By Pete Ehrmann

42 **SPECIAL SECTION: DIARY OF 1998**
THE RING Reviews The Year In Boxing
By D.E. Thomas



page 24

Photo by Frank Vitucci

page 30

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Floyd Mayweather Jr. by Chris Farina/Courtesy of Top Rank
Cover Design: Joseph Kalman

page 19

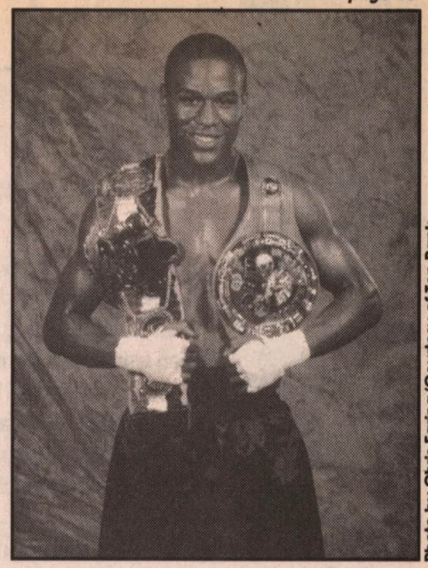

Photo by Chris Farina/Courtesy of Top Rank

Ringside Reports And Analyses

64 FIGHTER OF THE MONTH & RINGSIDE REPORTS

Ratings

13 RATINGS ANALYSIS

14 THE RING'S INTERNATIONAL RATINGS AND RECORDS

82 WBA, WBC, & IBF RATINGS

DEPARTMENTS

4 RINGSIDE, *by Nigel Collins*

6 COME OUT WRITING

8 ROUND ONE

16 RYAN OUT LOUD, *by Jeff Ryan*

59 NEW FACES: Light Heavyweight Richard Hall, *by Joe Santoliquito*

60 CAMERA CLICKS

62 WORLDWIDE FIGHT RESULTS

84 THE RING CLASSIC: THE RAPE OF SHELBY, *by Meg Bishop*

90 LOOKING AHEAD, *by Eric Raskin*

RINGSIDE

Some years there's no debate about who the Fighter of the Year is going to be; the selection is obvious. Take 1996, for example, the year Evander Holyfield shocked the world by knocking out Mike Tyson. Everybody agreed that "The Real Deal" deserved the honor. Other years it's not so easy to chose between the candidates, and on four occasions (1934, '72, '81, and '85) THE RING designated co-winners. 1998 falls somewhere between the two extremes, and while there were two principal nominees under consideration, one, Floyd Mayweather Jr., captured the prize by a clear-cut, albeit narrow, margin.

Sugar Shane Mosley, the other fighter given serious consideration, also had a brilliant year, defending the IBF lightweight title *five* times and punching out a place for himself among the finest fighters, pound-for-pound, in the world. And it would certainly surprise nobody if the multitalented Mosley wins the prize numerous times before he hangs up his gloves. (Muhammad Ali holds the record with five RING Fighter of the Year awards.) But in '98, "Pretty Boy Floyd" beat out Mosley in one extremely crucial area: quality of opposition.

Although there were a couple of well-known names on Mosley's '98 log in former champs John-John Molina (KO 8) and Jesse James Leija (KO 9), Sugar Shane's other three challengers—Demetrio Ceballos (KO 8), Wilfrido Ruiz (KO 5), and Eduardo Morales (KO 5)—were relatively obscure. Even Molina and Leija were past their primes, and not really arduous tests for the gifted champion.

Two of Mayweather's seven '98 adversaries, however, were of exceptional quality. They were then-WBC super featherweight champion Genaro Hernandez, from whom Mayweather won his first world title via eighth-round TKO, and Angel Manfredy, whom Mayweather stopped in the second round of his first title defense. Hernandez, never previously beaten as a 130-pounder and 12-0-1 in junior lightweight title fights, was widely considered one of the sport's most esteemed champions before Mayweather forced him to quit on his stool. Going in, Manfredy was unbeaten in his last 24 bouts, a streak that included victories over Arturo Gatti (KO 8), John Brown (W 12), Wilson Rodriguez (W 12), and Wilfrido Ruiz (KO 5), the same Colombian slugger who challenged Mosley.

So in the final analysis, the choice wasn't as tough as some might have thought. It all came down to whether or not Mayweather could beat Manfredy in convincing fashion. And though HBO's broadcast crew twice mentioned during the telecast that the winner would automatically be named THE RING's Fighter of the Year, that wasn't exactly the case. Had there been some sort of fluky or controversial conclusion, the award would have probably gone to Mosley. But Manfredy's protests notwithstanding, Pretty Boy Floyd's second-round blitz was more than convincing enough for us, making Mayweather the unanimous choice among the editorial staff as 1998's Fighter of the Year.

A brief word about THE RING's other yearly honors: The incredible first bout between Ivan Robinson and Arturo Gatti, which "Mighty Ivan" won via 10-round decision, was unquestionably Fight of the Year. Robinson's unexpected victory in their first war was also the Upset of the Year. And while it is true that several of the thrilling rounds that these two provided during their two scintillating encounters the past 12 months could have been Round of the Year, we've picked the electrifying third round of their second fight. Last but not least, the Knockout of the Year goes to Roy Jones for his spectacular, fourth-round, one-punch (right to the ribs) kayo of Virgil Hill.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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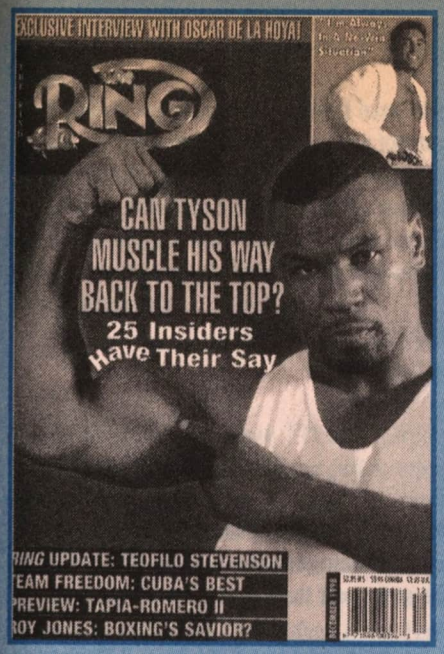

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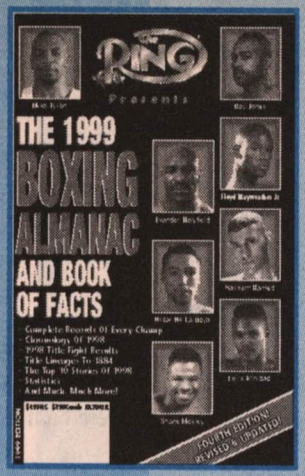

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COME OUT WRITING

We welcome your letters, which may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034

NOT SO HOLY

The mention you made regarding Evander Holyfield in "Round One" (January 1999) shows a different side of this man who claims to be a "True Believer." It intrigued me to know that he has five children out of wedlock, two of which were born in the same year that his current wife, Janice, had their son.

Evander's favorite Bible verse must be Genesis 9:1, "... Be fruitful and multiply ... " There is certainly no evidence that he pays any attention to Deuteronomy 5:18, "Thou shall not commit adultery!"

RON TINNELL
San Jose, CA

HOLD THE SUGAR

I was pleasantly surprised to see Sugar Shane Mosley on the cover of your January 1999 issue. But it's a little too soon to be comparing him to the likes of Sugar Ray Leonard and Sugar Ray Robinson. I know he looks like Robinson, but until he beats some big names, like Angel Manfredy, Steve Johnston, or Arturo Gatti, and unifies the lightweight title, he's got a ways to go before being the next "Sugar."

JEFF STEEN
Seattle, WA

Evander Holyfield should practice what he preaches, suggests reader Ron Tinnell, who thinks Holyfield's favorite biblical verse may be, "Be fruitful and multiply."

MORE HEAVY TALK

Though I didn't agree with your rankings 100 percent, I really enjoyed "The 50 Greatest Heavyweights Of All-Time" in your Holiday 1998 issue. Reading it, however, caused me to reflect upon how bad decisions impact the sport—not only in the present moment, but in the overall recollection of its history. For instance, though I'm sure many will disagree, I think Earnie Shavers and Ken Norton defeated Muhammad Ali in their title bouts with him. How would they have rated if they received the decisions they deserved? Same thing with Joe Walcott and his "loss" to Joe Louis in their first fight. A victory would have made him worthy of at least one notch higher.

Boxing needs to do something with its scoring system, whether it's to suspend judges who have obviously rendered dubious verdicts, announce scoring

at the end of each round, or offer five judges instead of three.

Of course, this last idea wouldn't have helped Shavers and Norton anyway, since they lost unanimously. But I guess in looking at the bright side, at least those two didn't suffer from the racial discrimination that so many others on your list did. I think your inclusion of several black non-champions was admirable.

JONATHAN DONAHUE
Concord, MA

Regarding your article "The 50 Greatest Heavyweight Of All-Time," I was just wondering why Eddie Machen doesn't fit into this picture, since he fought and beat most of the contenders of his era, and gave a good account of himself with the champions of that time. Surely, he must rate right up there with Zora Folley, Ernie Terrell, and Cleveland Williams, as well as Jerry Quarry, whom he beat. How could you not rate him over Jimmy Young, Pinklon Thomas, Michael Dokes, or Mike Weaver?

LARRY STOCKTON
Jacksonville, FL

"Prince" Naseem Hamed and former trainer Brendan Ingle during better times, just before Hamed's American debut against Kevin Kelley. Reader John Mullen wonders how Ingle endured Hamed's ingratitude for so long.

HOW 'BOUT JONES-BYRD?

I have just finished watching the Roy Jones-Otis Grant fight on HBO, and I think Jones is a Hector Camacho in disguise. One minute he's trying to be boxing's savior, and the next minute he's posing for the cameras at ringside while he's right in the middle of a fight. Granted, he's a very gifted and talented fighter, but he's too much in love with himself, and he's obsessed with "The Golden Boy" Oscar De La Hoya and THE RING's pound-for-pound title.

I wasn't impressed with his win over a blown-up middleweight like Grant. If Jones is as good as he thinks he is, there's another ex-middleweight out there I'd love to see him fight who has just as much hand speed, if not more, and is in the big-money division Jones supposedly wants to reach. That fighter is Chris Byrd. Not many heavyweight contenders are willing to fight him, and I don't think Jones would either.

Also, I have to throw out a quick congrats to James Page, Pittsburg, California's first champion.

MARK FERNANDEZ
Pittsburg, CA

PRINCELY EGO

I am sick to my stomach after reading the article in "Round One" ("Ingle Goes Public On Prima Donna Prince") about Brendan Ingle and "Prince" Naseem Hamed (January 1999). Who in the world does this kid think he is, making a statement like "I have made [Ingle] a millionaire"? Perhaps Hamed had forgotten who trained who in the gym! Were I Ingle, I don't think I would put up with such an ungrateful kid for 17 years. I'd send him back to where he came from.

Another thing that appalls me is that Hamed thinks he's mature just because he has a "beautiful child." Millions of kids have beautiful children, but that doesn't mean that they are all "mature."

I think that before anyone allows this ungrateful kid back into the ring, they should send him back to school to teach him a little behavior modification and respect! You can bet I won't be spending any of my hard-earned money to watch this ignoramus dance around the ring. Especially since he seems to forget where he came from and who got him to where he is at today!

JOHN MULLEN
Jamesburg, NJ

A THANK YOU

On behalf of the American Association for the Improvement of Boxing Inc. and the Jerry Quarry Foundation for Puglistica Dementia, I want to thank you for publicizing the Muhummad Ali Reform Act bill that the Unites States Senate, as you well-know, passed unanimously on October 7, 1998.

Without question, the passage of this bill in the House of Representatives and its subsequent implementation will promote the integrity and equity of boxing's ratings and financial practices, and will make an administrative suspension of a fighter committing a major foul automatically applicable to all 50 states. Thus state and Native American reservation boxing commissions will have more power to improve this great sport's affairs. Thanks again for your support on this and other important issues.

GEORGE OTTO
Washington, D.C.

[Editor's note: The writer is a representative for the American Association for the Improvement of Boxing Inc. and the Jerry Quarry Foundation for Pugilistica Dementia: 661 Morris Place, NE, No. 7, Washington, D.C. 20002-5251.] ■

ROUND ONE

SLICK THINKING

It was bad enough that he had wicked-punching Jose Luis Lopez in his face throwing bombs, the last thing WBA welterweight champion James Page needed was to have his legs repeatedly cut out from under him by a beer logo painted on the ring canvas. But before his scintillating 12-rounder with Lopez was over, Page was forced to pick himself up off the deck no less than seven times—one genuine knockdown, one questionable knockdown, and *five* logo-induced slips.

Page managed to stave off the attacks of both Lopez and the logo to retain the title in the first half of a Showtime doubleheader in Atlantic City. During intermission, with the main event between Johnny Tapia and Nana Konadu in jeopardy due to the unsafe condition of the ring, Showtime Boxing Executive Producer Jay Larkin leaped into action, a bottle of Pepsi Cola in his hand. He shook it up, sprayed the fizz all over the offending logo, wiped up the excess with a towel, and, *voila*, problem solved.

"My wife is a world-class ballerina, and she told me about it," explained Larkin. "Sometimes the dance surface is too slippery, so they use the soda remedy. It works every time."

Page is far from the first fighter to find himself on the floor compliments of a slippery logo. We've seen more and more logo-propelled pratfalls as corporate sponsorship becomes an increasingly significant part of boxing revenue. But should the treacherous trademark bear all the blame?

"I wonder if it's the logo or the fighters' shoes," said New Jersey boxing commissioner Larry Hazzard. "Page was wearing brand new boxing shoes with rubber bottoms."

Lou Duva, who worked Lopez' corner for the Page fight, claims it's a little bit of both.

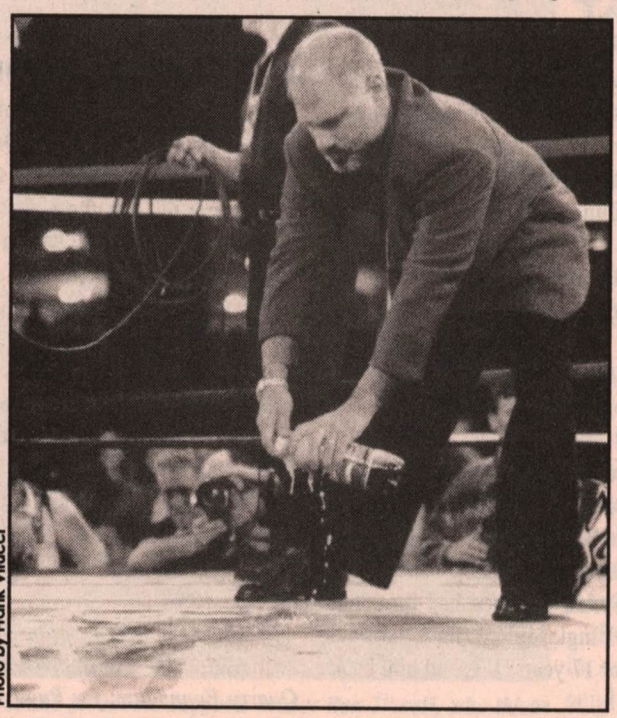


Photo by Frank Vitucci

Larkin saves the show with a bottle of pop

"The logo is the main problem. I've seen the same thing happen plenty of times. They should put it in the corner instead of the center of the ring," said Capt. Lou. "But you notice that Lopez didn't have a problem. That's because I anticipated it, and roughed up the bottom of his shoes with scissors."

But whose job is it to make sure the logo isn't lethal in the first place?

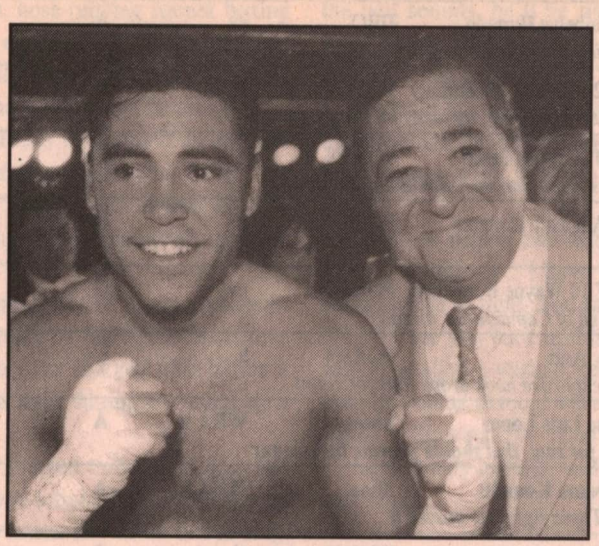
"Ultimately," said Larkin, "the local commission is responsible for making sure the ring is safe."

Hazzard said he'll investigate further if the problem continues. In the meantime, perhaps every cutman should find room in his kit bag for a bottle of soda next to the Q-tips and Enswell.

—Nigel Collins

TARNISHING THE GOLDEN IMAGE

We already knew Oscar De La Hoya isn't quite as perfect as the angelic image perpetuated by his promoters and marketing team, thanks to reports of his drinking, partying, and gambling. But at least drinking, partying, and gambling are legal activities. If there's any truth to the allegations made in a lawsuit filed on November 24, "The Golden Boy's" image will be thoroughly destroyed and his life permanently altered.



Arum insists De La Hoya is innocent

A complaint filed in San Bernardino County (California) Superior Court says De La Hoya raped a woman (identified as Jane Doe for the purposes of the case) in a hotel room in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, in June 1996, when the woman was 15. The suit also charges De La Hoya with assault, battery, false imprisonment, and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

"This is a total and complete crock," said Bob Arum, De La Hoya's promoter. "Two-and-a-half years after the alleged event, this complaint is filed. There never, ever, ever was a complaint made to the authorities in Cabo or to the hotel where the incident allegedly took place. It's an attempt to extort money and to use the legal system to extort money, and it's an absolute outrage because nothing ever happened. He wouldn't know this girl if she walked into the same room with him."

How Uncle Bob can know that "nothing ever happened" is tough to say, unless Arum has never let his prized superstar out of his sight. If Arum has been there every step of the way, though, he could make a lot of money telling the tabloids what he's seen. The accuser's lawyer, Lisa Maki, said she was told by De La Hoya's lawyer, Martin Castillo, that the WBC welterweight champ has slept with some 500 women since the time of the alleged incident. Those aren't quite Wilt Chamberlain numbers, but Oscar's no A.C. Green either.

—Eric Raskin

JOHNNY ON THE SPOT

When he fought Nana Konadu on December 5 in Atlantic City, Johnny Tapia turned in a masterful boxing performance to capture the WBA bantamweight title. But at no point during the 12 rounds did anything resembling a brawl erupt, a rarity for the easily excitable Tapia. Maybe that's why Tapia, who likes fighting almost as much as he likes breathing, managed to find a brawl out on the Atlantic City boardwalk the next day.

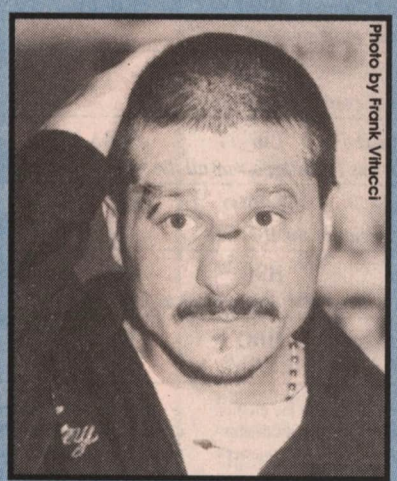


Photo by Frank Vilucci

Though dinged up by Konadu, Tapia still had some fight left in him

As he walked out of a store with his brother-in-law, Robert Gutierrez, and his cousin, Chris Chavez, Tapia saw a situation going down that made him drop the Christmas gifts he had just bought and spring into action. Five young men were beating up an old homeless man, estimated by Tapia to be in his 70s.

"I didn't like what I was seeing," Tapia said. "I love old people, and when I saw what was happening, I started crying inside my heart. So I got involved."

Facing five-on-three odds, Tapia and his companions came to the elderly man's rescue, punching, kicking, and scrapping until the dust had cleared, the police had arrived, and the five offenders were apprehended. Tapia said he may have taken a punch or two, but the action was mostly as one-sided as his bout with Konadu.

"I'm not calling myself a hero," Tapia said. "It's something I think a lot of people would have done in that situation. I didn't really think about if I would have gotten in trouble for getting involved, but I'm a free man these days, I'm not on parole or anything. I'm not afraid to go to jail, I've been there before. It's worth going to jail to prevent what I saw happening."

—Eric Raskin

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
11-27-98	Davey Hilton KO 12 Stephane Ouellet	ESPN2	m	C-	B+	B
Hilton scores dramatic last-second kayo that would make Sylvester Stallone proud						
11-28-98	Kostya Tszyu KO 5 Diobelys Hurtado	HBO	jw	A-	B+	B+
Miguel Angel Gonzalez had to like seeing Tszyu go down twice in first						
11-28-98	**Luisito Espinosa KO 2 Kennedy McKinney**	**HBO**	**WBC f**	**A**	**A-**	**B+**
Just when you thought Espinosa had turned boxer, he turns on the guns						
11-30-98	Mauricio Martinez KO 10 Edgar Jasso	FOXSN	b	C+	B+	A-
Floored in the second, Martinez batters Jasso into late submission						
11-30-98	Israel Vazquez KO 8 Augustin Lorenzo	FOXSN	jf	B-	B-	C+
Big right hand does it for Vazquez late						
12-4-98	Hector Camacho Jr. W 10 Wayne Boudreaux	FOXSN	jw	C-	C+	C-
Is it just us or have you also seen enough of Camacho Jr. already?						
12-4-98	Phil Jackson KO 2 Ray Anis	FOXSN	h	C+	B+	B+
One of the best knockouts of the year; explosive hook drops Anis for count						
12-5-98	**James Page W 12 Jose Luis Lopez**	**Show**	**WBA w**	**A**	**A+**	**A**
If anyone was wondering if Page was for real, this should provide the answer						
12-5-98	**Johnny Tapia W 12 Nana Konadu**	**Show**	**WBA b**	**A**	**B-**	**D+**
If there has ever been a more boring Tapia fight, we missed it						
12-7-98	Guty Espadas W 10 Ricardo Medina	FOXSN	jf	C+	B+	C+
Veteran Espadas rolls on with decision win						
12-7-98	Ed Mahone KO 3 Booker Word	FOXSN	h	C-	F	D-
Mahone may be the most protected heavyweight since Gerry Cooney						
12-8-98	Alonzo Highsmith D 6 Reggie Miller	USSB	h	D	C+	D+
It might be time for Highsmith to consider a return to the NFL						
12-8-98	Jesse Ferguson W 10 Obed Sullivan	USSB	h	C+	B-	B-
Rahman, Grant, now Ferguson; one, two, three strikes you're out, Sullivan						
12-8-98	Shannon Briggs KO 1 Marcus Rhode	USSB	h	C	F	F
As bad as Rhode is, if he could punch, he might've knocked out Briggs						
12-8-98	Kirk Johnson D 10 Al Cole	USSB	h	B-	B	B+
Who could have guessed that these two would put on such an entertaining war?						
12-11-98	Richard DeJesus W 10 Orlando Canizales	ESPN2	f	B-	C+	B-
If you thought Canizales deserved the decision, you're not alone						
12-11-98	Adan Vargas W 10 Carlos Contreras	FOXSN	b	B+	B-	C+
Vargas may set the record for most distance fights before he's through						
12-13-98	**Fernando Vargas KO 7 Yory Boy Campas**	**HBO**	**IBF jm**	**A+**	**A**	**B+**
Anyone need more proof that this is indeed a young man's game?						
12-13-98	Ivan Robinson W 10 Arturo Gatti	HBO	l	A-	A+	A
Robinson would be undefeated if he could fight Gatti every time out						
12-13-98	**Nestor Garza W 12 Enrique Sanchez**	**Uni**	**WBA jf**	**A-**	**B+**	**A-**
Sanchez' downfall wasn't unexpected, but it sure was exciting; a war all the way						
12-18-98	Diego Corrales W 12 Gary St. Clair	ESPN2	jl	B+	C+	B-
Hotshot Corrales earns himself a try at Roberto Garcia for the IBF title						
12-19-98	David Tua KO 10 Hasim Rahman	HBO	h	A-	A+	B+
Has there been a heavyweight in the last 10 years with as much late power as Tua?						
12-19-98	**Floyd Mayweather Jr. KO 2 Angel Manfredy**	**HBO**	**WBC jl**	**A+**	**A+**	**B+**
Mayweather ices Fighter of the Year honors with easy victory						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision

LET'S GET IT ON!

He's a former district attorney and circuit judge whose respect for the lessons learned in the squared circle put his own unique stamp on justice.

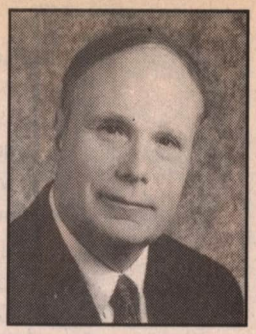
No, he's not the flamboyant, nose-rubbing former boxing referee now arbitrating disputes on his highly rated syndicated television show called *Judge Mills Lane*. He's Judge James C. Boll of Madison, Wisconsin, whose father had 80 pro bouts in the early part of this century and who was himself an intercollegiate boxer at the University of Wisconsin in the 1950s. "No other human endeavor is like it," said the now-retired 65-year-old jurist of boxing, a point Boll often impressed upon the defendants in his courtroom.

Boll told members of an organization of veteran boxers in Milwaukee that during his 11 years on the bench "numerous so-called tough guys came before me charged with hitting a person who didn't know how to fight, hitting a woman, or a person of advanced age.

"On almost every occasion, I turned to the defendant and said, 'You like to fight. I'll get you a fight. It won't be against a person half your size or a woman. It will be in the ring. You'll even get paid for it. Your opponent will be young. He'll be a person who likes to fight. When the bell sounds, he'll be right in front of you. His goal will be to knock you out.'

"I would then lean over toward the defendant and quietly say, 'Do you want me to get you that fight?'

"Not one person ever said yes. Then I would say, 'I have given you a chance to fight. You said no. If I ever see you back in this court again for hitting a person who is smaller, a woman, or an elderly man, I'll look at you and you'll look at me. I won't say a word, but you will know what I'm thinking: *You're a coward.*'"



Judge Boll: A hardliner against unfair fights

Interestingly enough, said Boll, "not one came back to my court again."

—Pete Ehrmann

SOME GOOD PRESS FOR OSCAR

De La Hoya hosted a black-tie benefit

Location? Beverly Hills. Minimum price for dinner seat? $350. Attire? Black ties for men, formal gowns for women. Number-one attraction? None other than WBC welterweight champ Oscar De La Hoya, who threw the event to raise funds for the foundation that carries his name.

Among celebrities spotted among the thousand or so attendees: Jay Leno, Magic Johnson, Sylvester Stallone, Shaquille O'Neal. Oh, and you know all those character actors you see in a million movies but you never know their names? They were all there, too. The place dripped with furs, jewels, cleavage, Rolexes, cell phones, and occasional sincerity.

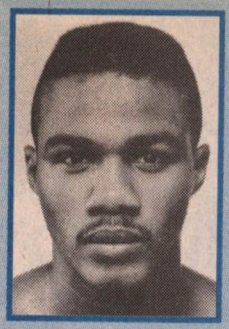
De La Hoya was restrained, handsome, and poised. WBC President Jose Sulaiman, perhaps too starstruck, awarded non-fighter Stallone a WBC championship belt. Oscar's long-time trainer Robert Alcazar also received an award.

De La Hoya, who now says he's going to be an actor when his fighting days are over, appears to have already accomplished some fair networking. Among businesses that purchased tables were Sony, Disney, HBO, 20th Century Fox, and Dreamworks.

The foundation teaches kids how to box, demanding they show responsibility and good grades, and even provides computer learning in its East L.A. gym. De La Hoya is hoping to open more centers elsewhere. Donations can be mailed to the Oscar De La Hoya Foundation, 2401 South Atlantic Boulevard, Monterey Park, CA 91754.

—Ivan Goldman

OUTSIDE THE ROPES



Trinidad: Back with King

Less than a week after **Felix "Tito" Trinidad** lost a legal battle to sever ties with promoter **Don King**, the IBF welterweight champion signed a $42.9-million contract with King that states he will have at least three fights per year over four years. The decision of a federal judge in New York in late-November forced Trinidad to cancel a contract he had signed with **Main Events**, who had promised him a January 9 bout with **Pernell Whitaker**. Trinidad reportedly received a $300,000 advance upon signing the contract in Fort Lauderdale, Florida ... **Prince Naseem Hamed** officially announced his split from longtime trainer **Brendan Ingle** in early-December, a move that seemed inevitable given the escalation of their well-publicized feud. "You cannot dismiss the time we have spent together," Hamed said of the man who trained him since age seven. "We have shared some very special times that I will remember forever" ... Heavyweight great **Joe Frazier** filed suit in mid-November against 475 Bucks County, Pennsylvania, homeowners, claiming he was never paid for the 140 acres of property they now live on, which he bought in 1973 and deeded to developers in the '80s. He is seeking $84-million from developers and residents ... **Hector Camacho** just can't stay out of trouble. He was charged in late-November with reckless driving, driving with a suspended license, and operating a motorcycle without endorsement after an incident in which he crashed his motorcycle in Orlando, Florida, fled the scene, and went home ... A new boxing record book is now available: *The British Boxing Board Of Control Yearbook 1999*, edited by Barry J. Hugman. The book, which costs £16.99 and is published by Queen Anne Press, contains, among other things, British and European title histories and full career records of all current British-based boxers ... A new company called **Ring-link**, the first-ever satellite feed service dedicated to boxing news, launched in November with the **Oscar De La Hoya-Ike Quartey** postponement press conference. "What we are doing is getting more boxing on television, so the next time you watch your local sportscast, hopefully there will be more news, highlights, knockouts, and information from around the world," said Ring-link founder Eric Drath ... Sadly, there are a couple of boxing deaths to report this month. **"Dynamite" Joe Rindone**, a popular Roxbury, Massachusetts, middleweight in the '40s and '50s, died of lung cancer at the age of 72 in early-December. The tough Rindone, 35-14-4 (14), was best known for his bouts with **Sugar Ray Robinson** in 1950 and '55. Also passing away in early-December was former lightweight and junior lightweight world title challenger **Johnny Bizzarro** of Erie, Pennsylvania, who died unexpectedly at the age of 60. Bizzarro, 54-11-2 (24), lost a 15-round decision to **Flash Elorde** in '63 for the junior lightweight belt, and was kayoed in 12 rounds by lightweight champ **Carlos Ortiz** in '66.

Bizzarro: Former contender dies at 60

THE PUNCHLINES

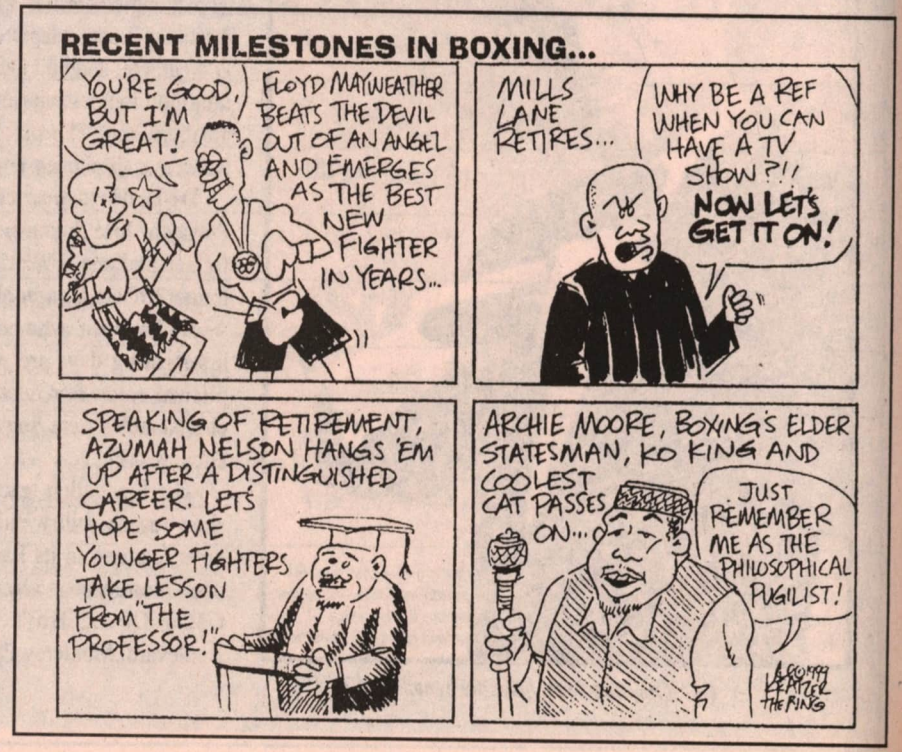
"The trainer tried to lift Kesha Snow in victory, but thought differently in the middle of the lift."

—Blow-by-blow man Al Albert, describing what happened at the conclusion of the December 8 women's heavyweight bout between 233-pound Snow and 231-pound Mary Barnes

"I gotta go see a doctor about them low blows. I think I gotta get 'em pulled out."

—Heavyweight Al Cole, after his bout with Kirk Johnson in which Johnson lost three points for punching below the belt

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

(For period ended January 3, 1999)

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. OSCAR DE LA HOYA
   Welterweight
2. ROY JONES
   Light Heavyweight
3. EVANDER HOLYFIELD
   Heavyweight
4. FELIX TRINIDAD
   Welterweight
5. MARK JOHNSON
   Junior Bantamweight
6. SHANE MOSLEY
   Lightweight
7. RICARDO LOPEZ
   Strawweight
8. FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.
   Junior Lightweight
9. NASEEM HAMED
   Featherweight
10. JOHNNY TAPIA
    Bantamweight

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Now that his bout with Larry Holmes has gone belly-up, George Foreman, who hasn't fought since he lost a controversial decision to Shannon Briggs on November 22, 1997, is dropped due to inactivity. In at the 10th position is Hasim Rahman, who was way out in front of David Tua (number eight) when he was cold-cocked after the bell.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No movement, though a rematch between WBC champ Juan Carlos Gomez and the man he beat to win the title, Marcelo Dominguez, which is reportedly scheduled for February, could change that.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Dariusz Michalczewski's TKO of Drake Thadzi isn't anywhere near enough to move the number-two rated German past Roy Jones.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Status quo.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Ryan Rhodes climbs up a notch to ninth thanks to his one-round kayo of veteran Fidel Avendano, who had extended Olympic hotshot David Reid the distance last year. Former WBA boss Julio Cesar Green, who hasn't had a significant fight since losing the belt back to William Joppy in January '98, slips to 10th.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: New IBF titlist Fernando Vargas rockets all the way from unranked to number one on the strength of his seventh-round TKO of Yory Boy Campas, who falls from first to fourth. The man Campas beat to win the title, Raul Marquez, is out.

WELTERWEIGHTS: WBA champion James Page advances from sixth to fourth after defending the title against dangerous Jose Luis Lopez, who dips from fifth to sixth. Pernell Whitaker, idle since October '97, continues to sink, and is now number five.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes from last month, but Antonio Diaz' points win over fellow prospect Cory Spinks has put him in position to crash the rankings with continued success.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Ivan Robinson rises from eighth to seventh following his second decision victory over Arturo Gatti. Ex-champ Phillip Holiday, who won a close decision over Robinson in '96, hasn't had a consequential fight since losing the belt to Shane Mosley in '97, and falls from seventh to eighth.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Angel Manfredy's startling second-round TKO defeat to WBC champ Floyd Mayweather Jr. causes "El Diablo" to descend from second to fourth.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: This might be third-rated Fred Norwood's last featherweight ranking. He's had another fight at lightweight since dropping the WBA feather title at the scales, and if he doesn't fight at 126 pounds soon, he's out.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: Nestor Garza enters the ratings at number five after outpointing Enrique Sanchez for the WBA title. Sanchez, who suffered his first pro defeat, drops from fifth to eighth.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: New entrant Johnny Tapia is installed at number two after outpointing Nana Konadu for the WBA belt. Konadu plummets to fifth, while Veerapol Sahaprom leaps from seventh to third as a result of his upset kayo of Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (now sixth) for the WBC crown.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: Major shakeup among the 115-pounders. Former IBF flyweight champ Mark Johnson debuts at number one, supplanting Tapia (number one last issue). WBC titlist In Joo Cho, who only has 13 pro bouts compared to 37 for Johnson, remains number two. Veteran Jesus "Kiki" Rojas returns to the ratings at number three after outpointing Satoshi Iida (down from third to fifth) for the WBA title. Julio Gamboa leaves to make room for "Too Sharp."

FLYWEIGHTS: With Johnson gone, Manny Pacquiao moves into the number-one slot due to his upset kayo of Chatchai Dutchboy Gym for the WBC title. Chatchai topples to fourth.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: American Will Grigsby wins the vacant IBF title with a decision over Ratanapol Sor Vorapin to enter the rankings at number four.

STRAWWEIGHTS: Sor Vorapin, formerly ranked number five at 105 pounds, drops out after losing to Grigsby at 108. Mexico's Edgar Cardenas debuts at the 10th position.

POUND-FOR-POUND: Extensive realignment among boxing's biggest stars: Stunning stoppage of Manfredy earns previously unranked Mayweather the eighth position, and dormant Whitaker is bounced to make room for Pretty Boy Floyd. Lopez and Mosley overtake Tapia, moving from ninth to seven and eighth to sixth, respectively. Naseem Hamed falls from seventh to ninth following a disappointing year in '98. Tapia hangs on in the 10th spot thanks to tame win over Konadu. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended January 3, 1999

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

In each division, fighters are ranked according to their abilities and accomplishments.

Being champion does not necessarily mean a fighter will be rated at the top of his weight class.

These ratings reflect how the best fighters in the world rate against one another.

Ratings By The Editors

Records By Fight Fax Inc.

Photo by Frank Vitucci

Ivan Robinson moved up a spot by beating Arturo Gatti again

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

1. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD**
   Fairburn, GA *36-3 (WBA/IBF Champ)*
2. **LENNOX LEWIS**
   England *34-1 (WBC Champ)*
3. **MICHAEL GRANT**
   Norristown, PA *28-0*
4. **MICHAEL MOORER**
   Detroit, MI *39-2*
5. **SHANNON BRIGGS**
   New York, NY *32-2*
6. **CHRIS BYRD**
   Flint, MI *26-0*
7. **IKE IBEABUCHI**
   Dallas, TX *19-0*
8. **DAVID TUA**
   Totowa, NJ *32-1*
9. **ANDREW GOLOTA**
   Chicago, IL *32-3*
10. **HASIM RAHMAN**
    Baltimore, MD *25-1*

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

1. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
   France *40-1 (WBA Champ)*
2. **JUAN CARLOS GOMEZ**
   Germany *25-0 (WBC Champ)*
3. **ARTHUR WILLIAMS**
   Las Vegas, NV *29-4-1 (IBF Champ)*
4. **MARCELO DOMINGUEZ**
   Argentina *25-2-1*
5. **CARL THOMPSON**
   England *24-4*
6. **IMAMU MAYFIELD**
   New Brunswick, NJ *18-2*
7. **ROBERT DANIELS**
   Miami, FL *38-3-1*
8. **RALF ROCCHIGIANI**
   Germany *40-9-7*
9. **SAUL MONTANA**
   Mexico *32-6*
10. **KENNY KEENE**
    Emmett, ID *43-3*

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight limit: 175 pounds

1. **ROY JONES**
   Pensacola, FL *38-1 (WBC/WBA Champ)*
2. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI**
   Germany *39-0*
3. **REGGIE JOHNSON**
   Houston, TX *38-5-1 (IBF Champ)*
4. **GRACIANO ROCCHIGIANI**
   Germany *40-4-1*
5. **LOU DEL VALLE**
   Bronx, NY *28-2*
6. **ERIC HARDING**
   Philadelphia, PA *15-0*
7. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
   Chicago, IL *32-2*
8. **MICHAEL NUNN**
   Davenport, IA *53-4*
9. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL *11-0*
10. **DAVID TELESCO**
    Port Chester, NY *20-2*

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

1. **FRANKIE LILES**
   N. Hollywood, CA *32-1 (WBA Champ)*
2. **JOE CALZAGHE**
   Wales *25-0*
3. **RICHIE WOODHALL**
   England *25-1 (WBC Champ)*
4. **SVEN OTTKE**
   Germany *13-0 (IBF Champ)*
5. **CHARLES BREWER**
   Philadelphia, PA *32-6*
6. **ROBIN REID**
   England *26-1-1*
7. **THOMAS TATE**
   Houston, TX *35-5*
8. **VINCENZO NARDIELLO**
   Italy *33-6*
9. **ANDREI SCHKALIKOV**
   Russia *29-4-1*
10. **VINNY PAZIENZA**
    Cranston, RI *43-7*

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Philadelphia, PA *34-2-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **WILLIAM JOPPY**
   Washington, D.C. *26-1-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **HASSINE CHERIFI**
   France *26-2-1 (WBC Champ)*
4. **KEITH HOLMES**
   Washington, D.C. *31-2*
5. **OTIS GRANT**
   Canada *31-2-1*
6. **ANTWUN ECHOLS**
   Davenport, IA *21-2-1*
7. **ROBERT ALLEN**
   Atlanta, GA *23-2*
8. **ROBERT McCRACKEN**
   England *32-0*
9. **RYAN RHODES**
   England *18-1*
10. **JULIO CESAR GREEN**
    Brooklyn, NY *23-3*

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

1. **FERNANDO VARGAS**
   Oxnard, CA *15-0 (IBF Champ)*
2. **LAURENT BOUDOUANI**
   France *38-2-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **KEITH MULLINGS**
   Brooklyn, NY *16-4-1 (WBC Champ)*
4. **YORY BOY CAMPAS**
   Mexico *72-3*
5. **HARRY SIMON**
   Namibia *17-0*
6. **JULIO CESAR VASQUEZ**
   Argentina *60-3*
7. **WINKY WRIGHT**
   St. Petersburg, FL *38-2*
8. **BRONCO McKART**
   Monroe, MI *35-2*
9. **TONY MARSHALL**
   Albany, NY *30-7-6*
10. **EMMETT LINTON**
    Tacoma, WA *25-2*

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

1. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Whittier, CA *29-0 (WBC Champ)*
2. **FELIX TRINIDAD**
   Puerto Rico *33-0 (IBF Champ)*
3. **IKE QUARTEY**
   Ghana *34-0-1*
4. **JAMES PAGE**
   Pittsburg, CA *23-3 (WBA Champ)*
5. **PERNELL WHITAKER**
   Norfolk, VA *41-2-1*
6. **JOSE LUIS LOPEZ**
   Mexico *42-4-2*
7. **OBA CARR**
   Detroit, MI *47-2-1*
8. **VERNON FORREST**
   Atlanta, GA *26-0*
9. **WILFREDO RIVERA**
   Puerto Rico *28-3-1*
10. **SHANNAN TAYLOR**
    Australia *23-0-1*

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

1. **VINCE PHILLIPS**
   Las Vegas, NV *39-3 (IBF Champ)*
2. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. *43-2 (WBA Champ)*
3. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Australia *22-1-1*
4. **MIGUEL ANGEL GONZALEZ**
   Mexico *43-1-1*
5. **BOLILLO GONZALEZ**
   Mexico *48-3-1*
6. **KHALID RAHILOU**
   France *32-3*
7. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY *19-0*
8. **JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ**
   Mexico *100-3-2*
9. **REGGIE GREEN**
   Clinton, MD *28-2*
10. **GIOVANNI PARISI**
    Italy *36-3-1*

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA *30-0 (IBF Champ)*
2. **JEAN-BAPTISTE MENDY**
   France *52-7-2 (WBA Champ)*
3. **CESAR BAZAN**
   Mexico *34-2-1 (WBC Champ)*
4. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO *25-1*
5. **ISRAEL CARDONA**
   Hartford, CT *30-2*
6. **ORZUBEK NAZAROV**
   Japan *26-1*
7. **IVAN ROBINSON**
   Philadelphia, PA *27-2*
8. **PHILLIP HOLIDAY**
   South Africa *34-1*
9. **ARTURO GATTI**
   Jersey City, NJ *29-4*
10. **JAMES LEIJA**
    San Antonio, TX *36-4-2*

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR**
   Grand Rapids, MI *18-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **TAKANORI HATAKEYAMA**
   Japan *22-0-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **ROBERT GARCIA**
   Oxnard, CA *31-0 (IBF Champ)*
4. **ANGEL MANFREDY**
   Gary, IN *25-3-1*
5. **YONG SOO CHOI**
   South Korea *24-3-1*
6. **GENARO HERNANDEZ**
   Los Angeles, CA *38-2-1*
7. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Austin, TX *25-1*
8. **GOYO VARGAS**
   Mexico *37-6-1*
9. **ANATOLY ALEXANDROV**
   Kazakhstan *34-3*
10. **ARNULFO CASTILLO**
    Mexico *28-0-2*

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

1. **NASEEM HAMED**
   England *31-0*
2. **LUISITO ESPINOSA**
   Philippines *44-7 (WBC Champ)*
3. **FRED NORWOOD**
   St. Louis, MO *33-0-1*
4. **DERRICK GAINER**
   Pensacola, FL *26-4*
5. **ANTONIO CERMENO**
   Venezuela *32-2 (WBA Champ)*
6. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
   Mexico *27-1*
7. **MANUEL MEDINA**
   Mexico *55-10 (IBF Champ)*
8. **ANGEL VAZQUEZ**
   Hartford, CT *16-0*
9. **CESAR SOTO**
   Mexico *52-7-2*
10. **WILFREDO VAZQUEZ**
    Puerto Rico *50-8-3*

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

1. **VUYANI BUNGU**
   South Africa *36-2 (IBF Champ)*
2. **ERIK MORALES**
   Mexico *31-0 (WBC Champ)*
3. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
   Mexico *47-2*
4. **WAYNE McCULLOUGH**
   Las Vegas, NV *22-2*
5. **NESTOR GARZA**
   Mexico *35-1 (WBA Champ)*
6. **KENNEDY McKINNEY**
   Memphis, TN *33-4-1*
7. **CARLOS BARRETO**
   Venezuela *13-0*
8. **ENRIQUE SANCHEZ**
   Mexico *24-1-1*
9. **MBULELO BOTILE**
   South Africa *23-1*
10. **DANNY ROMERO**
    Albuquerque, NM *33-3*

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

1. **TIM AUSTIN**
   Cincinnati, OH *18-0-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **JOHNNY TAPIA**
   Albuquerque, NM *45-0-2 (WBA Champ)*
3. **VEERAPHOL SAHAPROM**
   Thailand *16-1 (WBC Champ)*
4. **JORGE ELIECER JULIO**
   Colombia *40-1*
5. **NANA KONADU**
   Ghana *39-4*
6. **JOICHIRO TATSUYOSHI**
   Japan *17-5-1*
7. **SIRIMONGKOL SINGMANASSUK**
   Thailand *16-1*
8. **PAULIE AYALA**
   Ft. Worth, TX *25-1*
9. **DAORUNG C. SIRIWAT**
   Thailand *61-6-3*
10. **ADAN VARGAS**
    Mexico *29-1-1*

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

1. **MARK JOHNSON**
   Washington, D.C. *36-1*
2. **IN JOO CHO**
   South Korea *13-0 (WBC Champ)*
3. **JESUS ROJAS**
   Venezuela *32-7-2 (WBA Champ)*
4. **GERRY PENALOSA**
   Philippines *39-1-2*
5. **SATOSHI IIDA**
   Japan *25-1-1*
6. **YOKTHAI SITHOAR**
   Thailand *14-1-1*
7. **HAROLD GREY**
   Colombia *22-2*
8. **LUIS BOLANO**
   Colombia *23-0*
9. **RATANACHAI DUTCHBOY GYM**
   Thailand *26-3*
10. **JOEL LUNA ZARATE**
    Mexico *32-2-2*

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
   Philippines *24-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **HUGO SOTO**
   Argentina *50-5-2 (WBA Champ)*
3. **MAURICIO PASTRANA**
   Colombia *20-0*
4. **CHATCHAI DUTCHBOY GYM**
   Thailand *33-2*
5. **JOSE BONILLA**
   Venezuela *24-5*
6. **SAEN SOR PLOENCHIT**
   Thailand *29-1*
7. **ALEJANDRO MONTIEL**
   Mexico *37-3*
8. **RUBEN SANCHEZ-LEON**
   Mexico *22-7-1*
9. **DAVID GUERAULT**
   France *14-0*
10. **CHOKVIWAT CHOKCHAI**
    Thailand *30-3*

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

1. **SAMAN SORJATURONG**
   Thailand *39-2-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **PICHITNOI C. SIRIWAT**
   Thailand *20-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **BABY JAKE MATLALA**
   South Africa *50-10-2*
4. **WILL GRIGSBY**
   St. Paul, MN *13-1-1 (IBF Champ)*
5. **JUAN CORDOBA**
   Argentina *32-4-3*
6. **MELCHOR COB CASTRO**
   Mexico *52-5-4*
7. **JOMA GAMBOA**
   Philippines *25-3-1*
8. **OSVALDO GUERRERO**
   Mexico *24-3*
9. **YEOSAM CHOI**
   South Korea *18-1*
10. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
    South Africa *14-0*

STRAWWEIGHT
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

1. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
   Mexico *47-0-1 (WBC/WBA Champ)*
2. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
   Nicaragua *24-1-1*
3. **ZOLANI PETELO**
   South Africa *13-2-2 (IBF Champ)*
4. **WANDEE CHOR CHAREON**
   Thailand *22-3*
5. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand *38-1*
6. **ROCKY LIN**
   Philippines *26-2*
7. **ALA VILLAMOR**
   Philippines *29-2-1*
8. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico *19-1-1*
9. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Columbia *30-2*
10. **EDGAR CARDENAS**
    Mexico *24-6-1*

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

SWING TIME

If you ever wondered why fighters are about as fond of publicity tours as they are of doing five miles of roadwork in an ice storm, all you had to do was tune in to *Live With Regis & Kathie Lee* a couple of months ago and watch Evander Holyfield and Lennox Lewis waste 15 minutes they could have put to better use daydreaming in the back of a limo stuck in traffic.

While the two soft-spoken heavyweights tried to conduct themselves like sportsmen who respect what each other has accomplished, there was Regis Philbin, an unfunny self-parody who masquerades as a co-host, bellowing like "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin and trying to goad his guests into trading cheap insults. How lame was it? Well, when the chiming in of Kathie Lee Gifford actually adds some dignity to the proceedings, you know things have become embarrassing.

To their credit, Holyfield and Lewis didn't bite. They didn't go for Philbin's bait, that is, nor did they chomp a chunk out of each other's flesh and have to be pulled apart by stagehands. Sorry to disappoint you, Regis (and all those like him), but for a change, boxing has insulated itself from the buffoonery.

Lewis, Don King, and Holyfield are working together to produce a unified champ

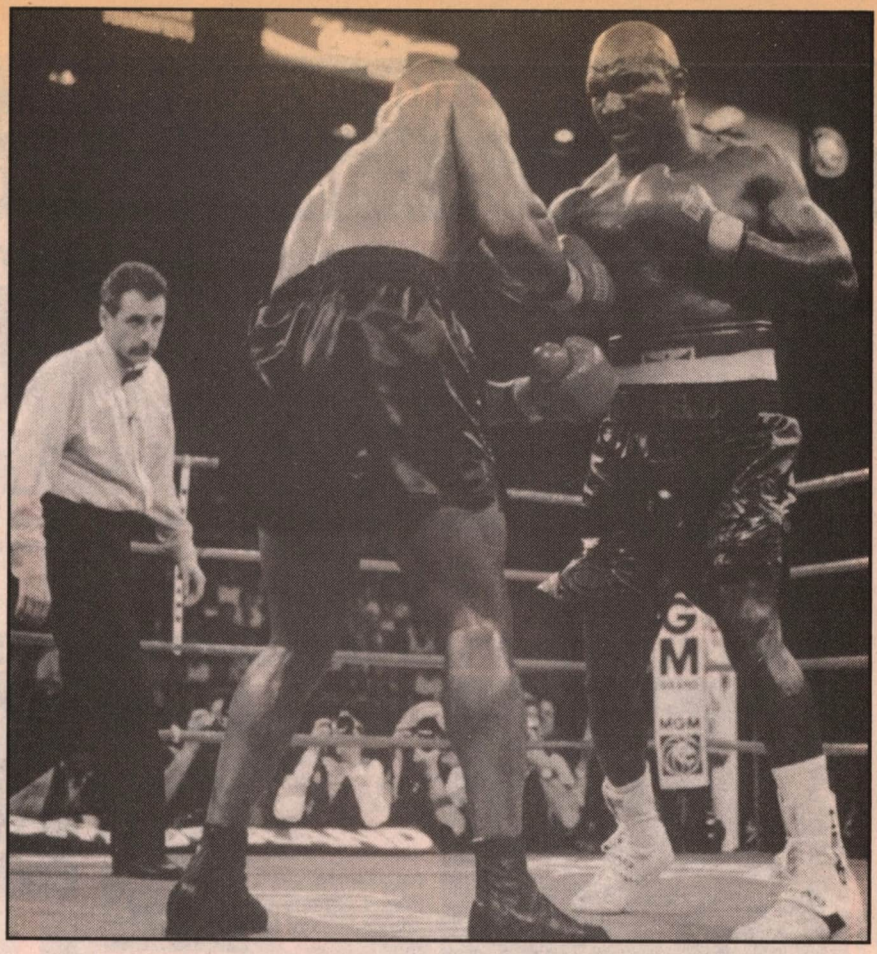
This time, the fight posters, television commercials, and radio sound bites can boast of a marquee matchup—*the* marquee matchup—that doesn't involve an ex-con anxious trying to turn his opponent into Van Gogh, a fat and fortysomething funny man, or yet another return of Sugar Ray Leonard. The fight's appeal isn't what could happen if one guy nails the other one low a dozen times. There's little chance of a nervous breakdown in the ring, and it's hard to envision even a mini-riot. No, March 13 can't be sold as roller derby on a canvas track or a circus sideshow. Send *out* the clowns.

Holyfield-Lewis is simply a no-nonsense, straight-ahead, three-yards-and-a-cloud-of-ring-rosin superfight—albeit one that has simmered so long as to be robbed of its peak flavor. We won't see any wild ring attire, tattooed torsos, or 20-minute hip-hop ring entrances amid clouds of smoke. There won't be any dry ice in Madison Square Garden that night, just icebags and Enswells. The winner gets the linear crown—and unifies the alphabet title for the first

time since 1992. If that doesn't generate super pay-per-view numbers, so be it. Cable operators can make their money back on Butterbean-George Foreman, Leonard-Duran IV, or some other silliness.

My prediction of how this battle will unfold hasn't changed much since this time last year, but recent events have made me less sure of myself. The 36-year-old Holyfield, who has been my pick since Day One, looked very beatable against Vaughn Bean. If Lewis' punishing right hand hits "The Real Deal" half as many times as Bean's right did, we're going to see a repeat of Holyfield's kayo loss to Riddick Bowe in their rubber match, an outcome everyone seems to have completely forgotten in light of Holyfield's subsequent trashings of Mike Tyson and Michael Moorer.

The longer Holyfield fights, the better the chance that he's going to suddenly turn old one night. It could easily happen against a bigger opponent who possesses the same punishing right cross as Bowe, a similar, if not quite as dominant, jab, and a superior defense. If Lewis needs any more incentive than the titles at stake and his fierce pride, he can remind himself that his place in Canastota isn't secure, because he has yet to defeat a great fighter. If he is soundly beaten by Holyfield and never avenges that defeat, history won't be as kind to The Briton as it will be to Tyson or even the underachieving Bowe.



Holyfield will give everything he has, and, just like Tyson, Lewis will fold

Of course, even an aging and faded Holyfield would be a nightmare for the version of Lewis who was beaten (though not on the cards) by Ray Mercer, wobbled by Shannon Briggs, made to look bad by Zeljko Mavrovic, and unable to cleanly dispatch Oliver McCall and Henry Akinwande when both essentially gave up against him. Picture the Lewis who short-circuited the nervous systems of Razor Ruddock and Andrew Golota, and you begin to feel sorry for the face-first Holyfield. But then recall what happened when McCall, who possesses about .0001 percent of Holyfield's fury, nailed Lewis on the chin in their first meeting. London Bridge didn't fall that hard.

Did the two camps wait too long to bring this shootout to fruition? No question, and that is going to cheapen the quality of the matchup in the minds of some of us. But it's still a pairing of two intriguing heavyweights who have cleaned out the division and have no one left to fight but each other. Holyfield-Lewis isn't another Ali-Frazier, as the MSG hucksters foolishly want us to believe, but it's the most important heavyweight title clash since Tyson-Michael Spinks in 1988. That was a *decade* ago.

Though he's no kid himself at 33, Lewis has the physical edge, the bigger single weapon of destruction, the greater motivation, and he has more mileage left in his legs than Holyfield can coax out of those bald tires he rode for 12 rounds against Bean. So why, then, is Holyfield my selection by ninth-round knockout? Because my days of underestimating The Real Deal ended when a heavily favored Tyson stumbled helplessly into the ropes that incredible night in Las Vegas in November 1996.

Holyfield doesn't have Lewis' one-punch power or jab, but he's a better boxer than the Englishman is a brawler, and will fare better when kept on the outside than Lewis will fare when forced to brawl at close quarters. Holyfield may have nothing left to accomplish except to slap an exclamation point on a career that far surpassed everyone's expectations, including his own. But the true greats don't need a reason to lift their games, beyond the fact that they're suiting up and people have come to watch them.

Never have the intangibles been more of a factor than when Holyfield is one of the guys touching gloves and coming out fighting. He has the stronger will, he'll be more likely to rebound from a knockdown or be unfazed by a serious cut, and he is the smarter tactician. Does Holyfield have one more great effort left in those tired dinosaur bones? My feeling is that he does.

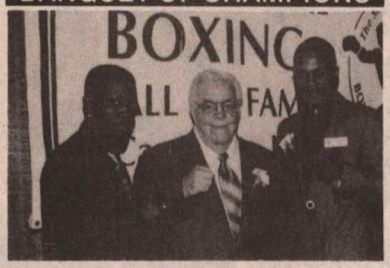
Basically, my pick comes down to this: Holyfield knows this is his last trip to the well, and he'll hold nothing back. Lewis, on the other hand, has always fought as though he's saving himself for the future. No sense of desperation, no willingness to ever empty the tank or take chances. Lewis knows he's got a few more years ahead of him if he escapes undamaged, as well as a lucrative HBO contract.

Maybe there *is* a version of Lewis who's willing to leave all of himself in the ring on March 13, but I've never seen it. And in such a high-stakes war, against such a magnificent warrior, lacking even a tiny bit of fortitude can and will make all the difference. ■

★ INDUCTION WEEKEND JUNE 10-13, 1999 ★

★ A Tenth Year Celebration ★

BANQUET OF CHAMPIONS



Welcome . . . Pound for pound greats Pernell Whitaker and Felix Trinidad join Lou Duva at banquet dais.

FIST CASTING

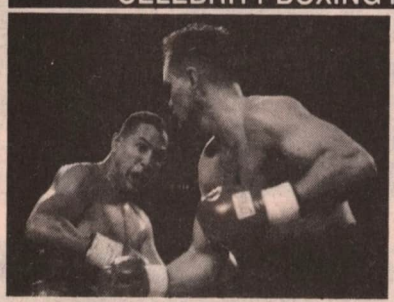
Everlasting. . . A fist cast by Sugar Ray Leonard.

PARADE OF CHAMPIONS

Greetings . . . From marching bands to special personalities, the parade has it all.

Action! . . . Hollywood star Danny Aiello enjoys parade route.

CELEBRITY BOXING NIGHT



Fight Night . . . Hector Camacho in action-packed bout at Turning Stone Casino Resort.

Roadwork . . . Hagler, Martin and Trinidad ready for run.

5K RACE, FUN RUN

Go! . . . Start of the morning run

GOLF TOURNAMENT

Fore . . . Gerry Cooney tees off and Marvelous Marvin Hagler spots his shot.

INDUCTION CEREMONY

Alumni . . . Left, Canto, Duva, and Saad Muhammad show off Hall of Fame rings. At right, Sugar Ray Leonard and Jose Torres at their 1997 induction.

BOXING CARD SHOW

A Collector's Dream . . . Boxing memorabilia for fans. The world's only all-boxing show and sale draws collectors from throughout the world.

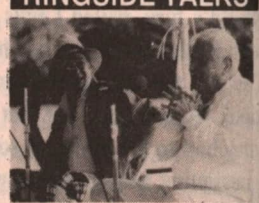
VIP COCKTAIL RECEPTION

Fine aged as wine . . . Legendary champions Moore, LaMotta, Patterson welcome fans at VIP gala reception.

WORKOUT SESSIONS

Conditioning . . . Kevin Kelley works the speed bag while Christy Martin focuses during shadowboxing for the public on the Museum grounds.

RINGSIDE TALKS



Reminiscing . . . Bert Sugar interviews Hall of Famer Joey Giardello.

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"He's So Good, It's Scary"

By **Nigel Collins**

The original "Pretty Boy Floyd" was a machine-gun-toting gangster who was mowed down by FBI agents in an Ohio cornfield in 1934. Boxing's Pretty Boy Floyd dispatches his victims with fists that fly almost as fast as bullets, but besides sharing a nickname, WBC super featherweight champion Floyd Mayweather Jr. has little in common with the Depression-era gunman. Instead of robbing banks, the baby-faced fighter is stealing headlines—and awards—from his better-known brethren and establishing himself as a leader among a new generation of gifted young fighters who are taking boxing into the new millennium.

"Floyd's so good, it's scary," said HBO Sports Vice President Lou DiBella, echoing a sentiment heard again and again the weekend before Christmas in Miami, where the 21-year-old (he could pass for a high school student) was making his first defense of the title he'd won by stopping Genaro Hernandez in October. And if industry insiders were surprised by the ease with which Mayweather dominated Hernandez, they were flabbergasted by the nonchalant manner in which he brushed aside Angel Manfredy, arguably the toughest challenger currently available among 130-pounders.

The second-round TKO of Manfredy topped a fantastic, seven-fight year for Mayweather, a year that saw him emerge from the ranks of prospects and assume a place among boxing's pound-for-pound best. His rise to prominence the past 12 months has been so speedy and so spectacular, Mayweather has been chosen as THE RING's Fighter of the Year for 1998.

Mayweather—the son of former fringe contender Floyd Sr. and the

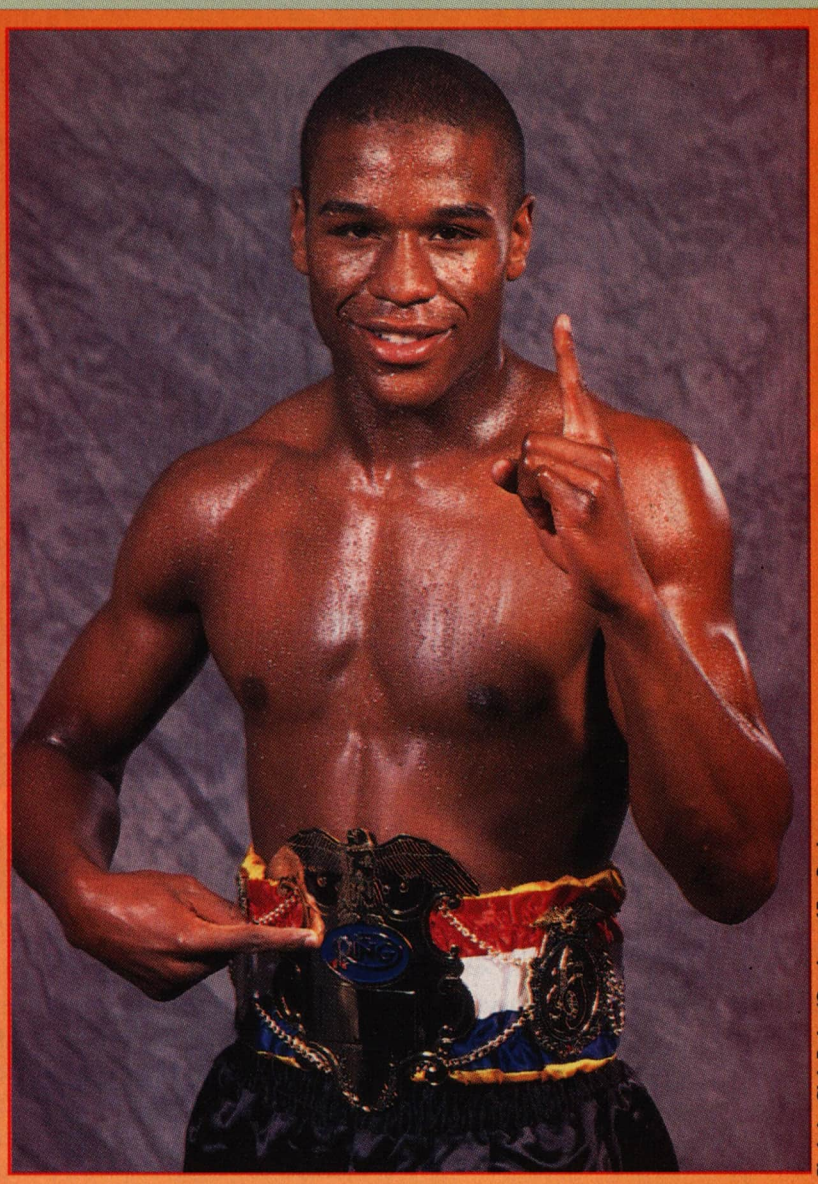


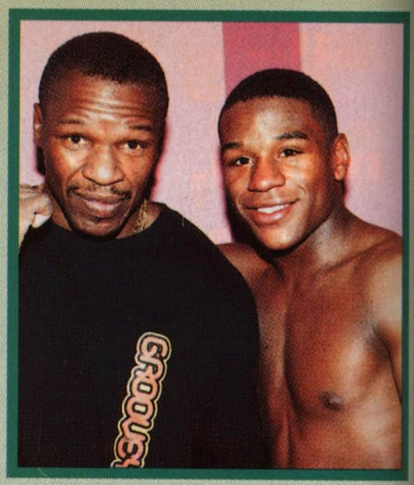
Photo by Chris Farina/Courtesy of Top Rank

The Ring's Fighter Of The Year

FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.

Photo by Al Bello/Allsport

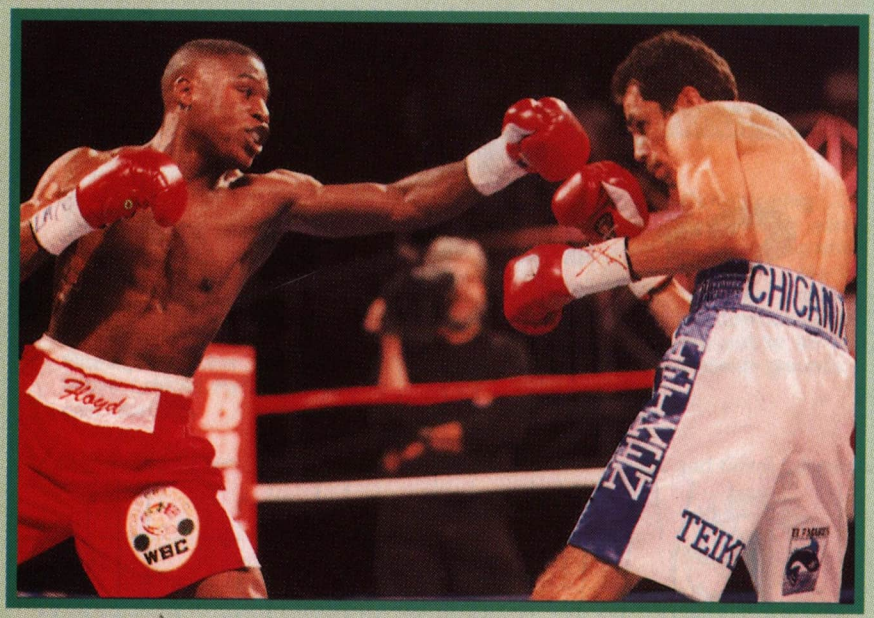
Mayweather hammers a frantic-looking Manfredy into the ropes with a prolonged volley in the second round. When "El Diablo" didn't punch back, the referee stopped the fight.



While some experts thought his father was rushing Mayweather into a premature title shot, so far Floyd Sr. has done an excellent job of guiding his son's career.

nephew of two-time former champion Roger Mayweather and journeyman Jeff Mayweather—won a bronze medal at the '96 Olympics, signed a promotional contract with Top Rank shortly afterward, and hasn't looked back since.

Going into the Hernandez fight, there were plenty of people who thought "Chicanito" would wipe the perpetual smile off Mayweather's face and send him back to the preliminary ranks. After all, Hernandez was a highly respected champion, unbeaten as a junior lightweight and 38-1-1 (17) overall. What was a young upstart with only 17 pro bouts to his name going to do against such an accomplished performer? Answer: Damned near anything he wanted. Mayweather was so dominant, a frustrated and totally outclassed Hernandez quit on his stool at the end of the eighth round, his title gone, his reputation sullied by a kid who'd been fighting six-rounders the same time the year before.



Reaching for glory: Mayweather was so sure he'd beat Genaro Hernandez, he went into their junior lightweight title bout with a WBC champion patch already sewn onto his trunks.

Still, there were disbelievers. Skeptics were quick to point out that Hernandez had quit. Wait until Pretty Boy runs into somebody who fights back. Then we'll see what he's really made of. Manfredy, the tattoo-covered, reformed street thug from East Chicago, Indiana, seemed just the man to test Mayweather's mettle. "El Diablo" was also enjoying an excellent year. He'd ended Arturo Gatti's string of miraculous wins in January, stopped journeyman Isander Lacen in June, and then held off a strong bid from John "The Eastern Beast" Brown to capture a 12-round decision in September. True, Mayweather was younger and faster, but Manfredy has that maniacal intensity about him that often proves the difference in evenly matched bouts.

"Mayweather fought a good fight against Hernandez. I can't take nothing away from him," said the 24-year-old Manfredy a few days before the fight. "But let's face it: Genaro Hernadez didn't come to fight. He gave the belt to Mayweather. It was almost like he was saying, 'Here. Take it. I don't want it no more. It's your turn

THE RING'S FIGHTERS OF THE YEAR

1928: Gene Tunney
1929: Tommy Loughran
1930: Max Schmeling
1931: Tommy Loughran
1932: Jack Sharkey
1933: No Award
1934: Tony Canzoneri/Barney Ross
1935: Barney Ross
1936: Joe Louis
1937: Henry Armstrong
1938: Joe Louis
1939: Joe Louis
1940: Billy Conn
1941: Joe Louis
1942: Ray Robinson
1943: Fred Apostoli
1944: Beau Jack
1945: Willie Pep
1946: Tony Zale
1947: Gus Lesnevich
1948: Ike Williams
1949: Ezzard Charles
1950: Ezzard Charles
1951: Ray Robinson
1952: Rocky Marciano
1953: Bobo Olson
1954: Rocky Marciano
1955: Rocky Marciano
1956: Floyd Patterson
1957: Carmen Basilio
1958: Ingemar Johansson
1959: Ingemar Johansson
1960: Floyd Patterson
1961: Joe Brown
1962: Dick Tiger
1963: Cassius Clay
1964: Emile Griffith
1965: Dick Tiger
1966: No Award
1967: Joe Frazier
1968: Nino Benvenuti
1969: Jose Napoles
1970: Joe Frazier
1971: Joe Frazier
1972: Muhammad Ali/Carlos Monzon
1973: George Foreman
1974: Muhammad Ali
1975: Muhammad Ali
1976: George Foreman
1977: Carlos Zarate
1978: Muhammad Ali
1979: Ray Leonard
1980: Thomas Hearns
1981: Ray Leonard/Salvador Sanchez
1982: Larry Holmes
1983: Marvin Hagler
1984: Thomas Hearns
1985: Marvin Hagler/Donald Curry
1986: Mike Tyson
1987: Evander Holyfield
1988: Mike Tyson
1989: Pernell Whitaker
1990: Julio Cesar Chavez
1991: James Toney
1992: Riddick Bowe
1993: Michael Carbajal
1994: Roy Jones
1995: Oscar De La Hoya
1996: Evander Holyfield
1997: Evander Holyfield
1998: Floyd Mayweather Jr.

now.' It's easy to look good against somebody who ain't fighting you back."

You can't blame Manfredy for feeling the way he did, and against most fighters with such a skimpy resume, he probably would have been right in his assessment. But considering what he's accomplished, who he's accomplished it against, and how quickly he's done it, Mayweather can't be judged by normal standards. He's practically in a league of his own compared to other 18-fight hotshots. Even Sugar Shane Mosley didn't make such an immediate impact, having to wait until his 24th pro fight before getting a title shot.

Mayweather's boxing roots have obviously played a very significant role in making him who he is today. His father began training him when he was a boy, and when Floyd Sr. was sent to prison for drug trafficking, Uncle Roger and Uncle Jeff took over. There were fears, however, that when the elder Mayweather was released from jail in February '98, his influence would be counterproductive. His criminal past was only part of it; a lot of people thought he was rushing Floyd Jr., expecting too much too soon. Then there was Floyd Sr.'s personality to contend with. He can be abrasive, especially when it comes

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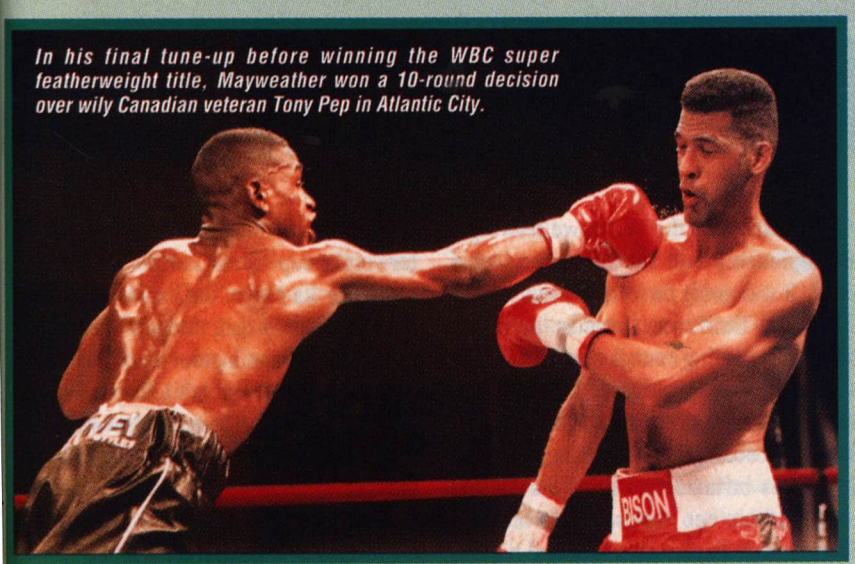


In his final tune-up before winning the WBC super featherweight title, Mayweather won a 10-round decision over wily Canadian veteran Tony Pep in Atlantic City.

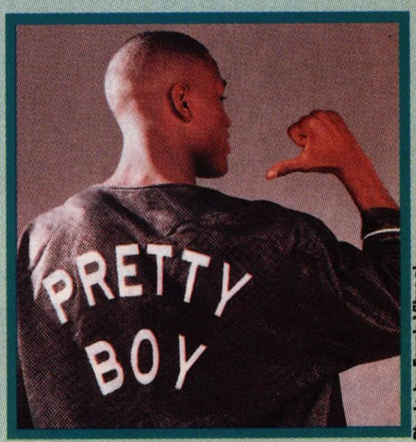
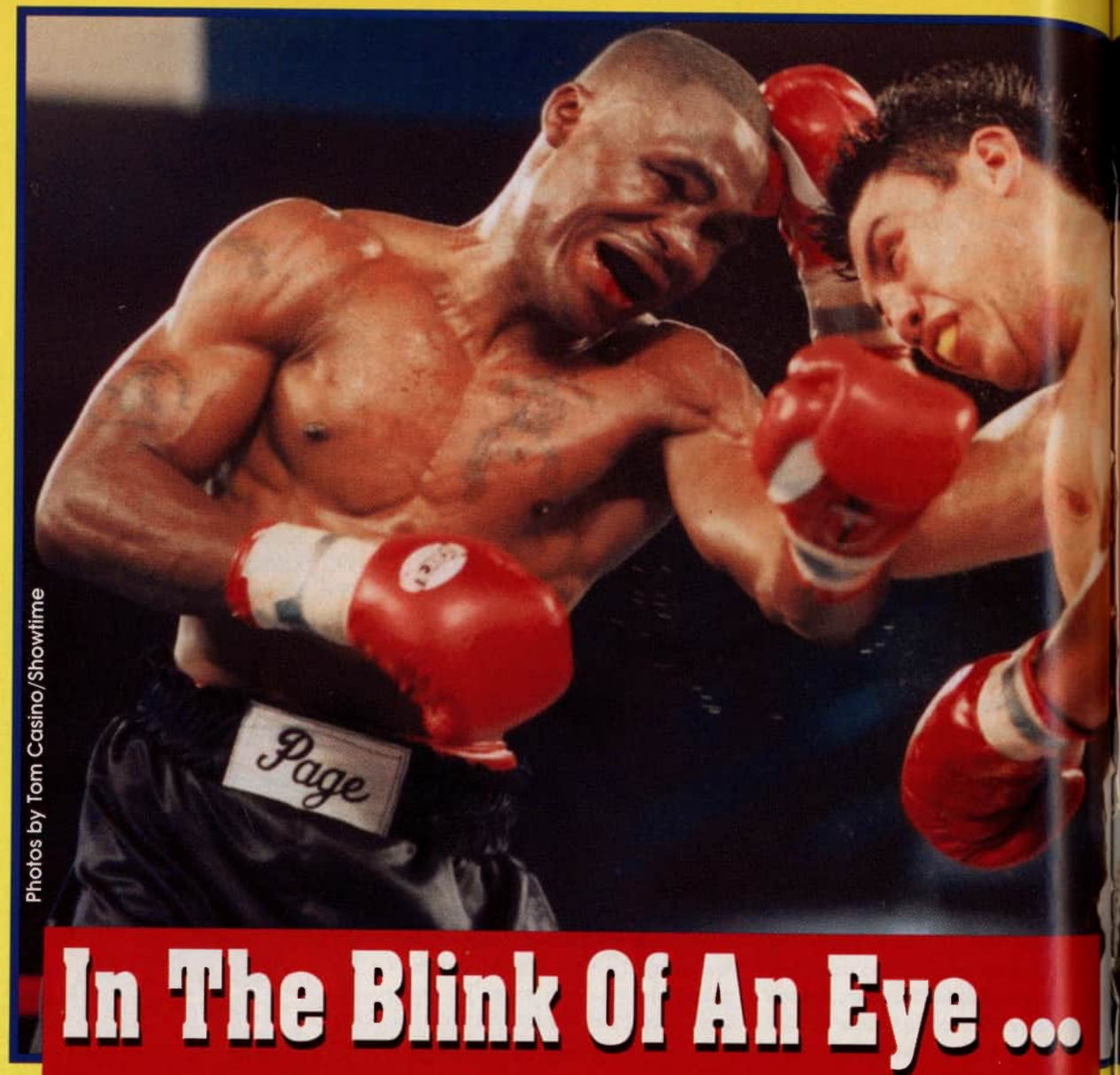


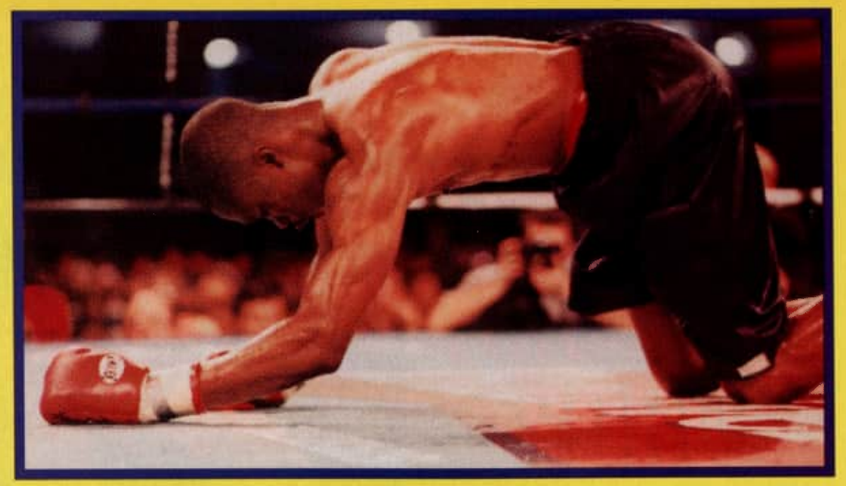
Photo by Frank Vitucci

He's no gangsta, but Mayweather aims to make the world forget about the original "Pretty Boy" Floyd.



Photos by Tom Casino/Showtime

Page survived a vicious shootout with Jose Luis Lopez to retain the WBA welterweight title in one of 1998's most exciting brawls. Now Page is looking forward to marquee fights against Felix Trinidad, and maybe Oscar De La Hoya.



Page was bothered throughout the fight by a wet and slippery ring floor. A slick beer logo painted on the canvas was responsible for the pratfall pictured and four others like it.

Every time Lopez connected with one of his bombs, Page lashed back with his own powershots. Afterward, the WBA champ said hitting Lopez' head was like hitting a cinderblock.

In The Blink Of An Eye ...

JAMES PAGE BECOMES A WELTERWEIGHT FORCE

By Joe Santoliquito

It wasn't the kind of victory party James Page had envisioned for himself. He pictured his welcome into the realm of boxing royalty with confetti spray and a triumphant march on the shoulders of his handlers, his arms held high in the air. Instead, to his way of thinking, his entrance into the big time had been more like a series of public pratfalls.

Nonetheless, the WBA welterweight championship belt sat propped up on a stool. It was going back home with Page to Pittsburg, California, because he'd survived 12 grueling rounds against the iron fists and granite jaw of Jose Luis Lopez in his first defense of the title. Afterward, his head was oblong from swelling, his right hand was inflated two times its normal size, and his ego was severely bruised. Even though Page suddenly found himself being mentioned in the same breath as welterweight superstars Felix Trinidad and Oscar De La Hoya, the expression on his face matched the dark curtains of his dressing room. His coming-out party had been a success, but you couldn't tell by his disposition. Page's mind seemed elsewhere, and someone had to remind him not to forget the belt.

When reminded that he'd just won the biggest fight of his life in front of a national television audience, Page turned and said, "Look at me, man, I'm a mess. My hands feel like I've been punching cinderblocks the whole night. I'm not really an excitable guy and I'm not real happy with the way I fought. I thought I looked like an amateur, slipping and sliding all over the place."

At that point, the last thing Page wanted to think about was his future. He felt like he'd been fighting on ice. He hadn't been able to use the whole ring in fear he would slip, something he did officially five times during the bout, thanks to a slick, water-soaked beer logo painted on the canvas. His ego had betrayed him, too. The inner-voice he usually obeys during a fight disappeared when Lopez blasted him into the ropes with a third-round barrage that prompted Tony Perez to intercede and give the glassy-eyed Page a standing eight-count.

A few days later, Page, 23-3 (18), had had a chance to reflect on the biggest night of his career, a performance that could soon place him in a new tax bracket.

"Going into the fight, I knew there was a lot of pressure on me," Page said. "Boxing is a tough sport; it's a serious sport. I wanted to be perfect. It's like coming off a street fight, and you're still mad when you get into the house. That's the

(Continued on page 73)

FERNANDO VARGAS:

"He's Gonna Make People Forget About ..."

... OSCAR WHO?

By Eric Raskin

When a fighter has unbending confidence in himself, he inspires similar confidence in those around him. Fernando Vargas cannot conceive of himself losing. There is no one he doesn't believe he can beat, and he sees no reason not to expect to see his name at the top of pound-for-pound lists in a couple years' time. The 21-year-old phenom's confidence should not be confused for arrogance or brashness, mind you. He doesn't insult his opponents at press conferences or tell them they don't have a chance. But deep down inside, that's what he believes.

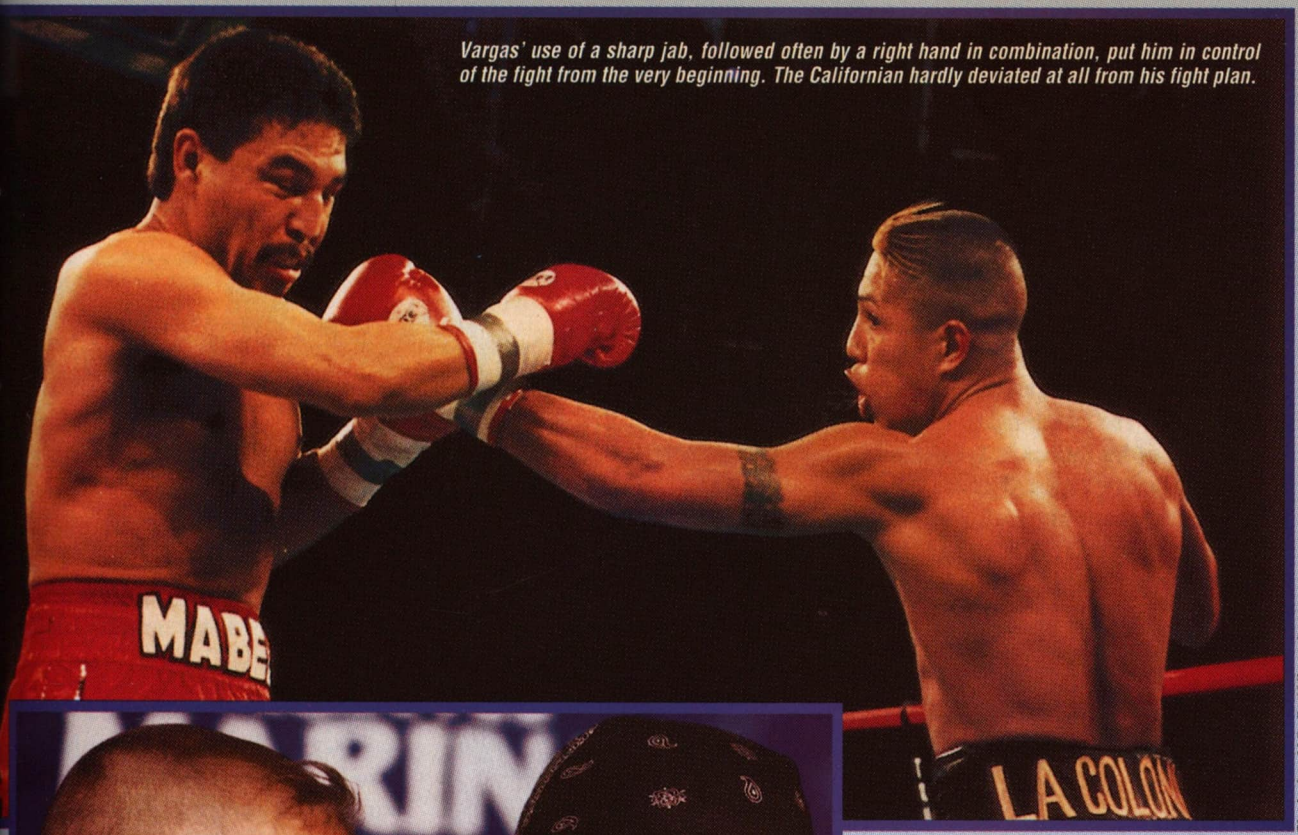
And as a result, those around him have taken to believing the same things. The words spoken by promoter Dino Duva on the heels of Vargas' convincing destruction of Yory Boy Campas for the IBF junior middleweight title tell you all you need to know about how the self-belief has been transmitted.

"Fernando Vargas ended out this year gaining a world championship quicker than anyone could have imagined," Duva said at the postfight press conference. "He's only been fighting for a year-and-a-half, 15 fights, and beginning in 1999, everyone's taking a backseat to Fernando Vargas because he's going to become a superstar in boxing.

"There were a lot of questions. Was Fernando ready? Was Yory Boy too experienced? Was Yory Boy too big of a puncher? Was Fernando too young? All of these questions were answered one way: Fernando Vargas was ready and he did what he had to do. Tonight was the first of many world championships and many, many world title defenses. He's going to set records. They talk about him being the next Oscar De La Hoya. He is not the next Oscar De La Hoya, he's Fernando Vargas, and he's gonna make people forget about Oscar De La Hoya."

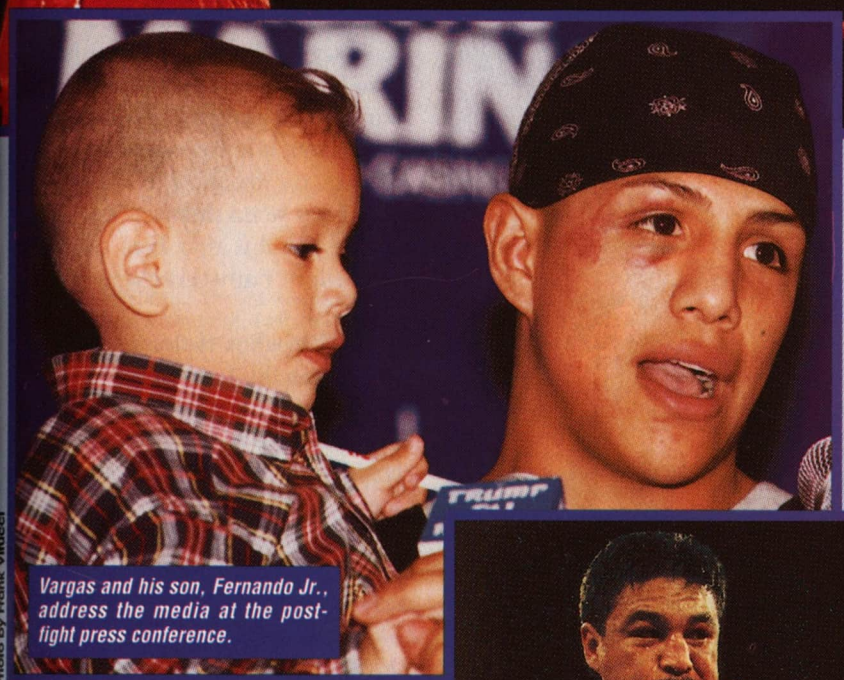
Whether Vargas can actually surpass and make people forget about a bona fide superstar like De La Hoya is up for debate, but this much is true: Over seven rounds of dominance and near-perfect execution, he did make people forget about veteran Mexican slugger Campas, a man previously considered by many to be the best and most dangerous fighter in the junior middleweight division.

The emotional Vargas bursts into tears when the IBF junior middleweight title belt is strapped around his waist. At just 21 years of age, Vargas is the youngest world champion ever at 154 pounds and seems destined for even greater achievements.



Vargas' use of a sharp jab, followed often by a right hand in combination, put him in control of the fight from the very beginning. The Californian hardly deviated at all from his fight plan.

Photo by Al Bello/Allsport



Vargas and his son, Fernando Jr., address the media at the post-fight press conference.

Photo by Hank Virdell

Lou Duva. Vargas jabbed and moved, firing one-twos and circling out of range of Campas' left hook. Late in the second, with the 27-year-old champion showing the first signs of frustration, Vargas smiled, pointed to his head, and ripped Campas with a sharp left-right.

In the third, another left-right combination wobbled Campas, and when he righted himself, he noticed blood flowing into his

During an eight-week training period, beginning two weeks before the fight was even signed because the title shot meant so much to the ultra-motivated Vargas, a great deal of time was spent perfecting the art of throwing quick combinations and moving. Vargas also worked quite a bit on getting off the ropes, knowing the bullish champion would stalk him and try to pin him there. And from the opening bell at the Mark G. Etess Arena at Atlantic City's Trump Taj Mahal, he flawlessly implemented the strategy designed by trainers Eduardo Garcia, Roger Bloodworth, and

Photo by Al Bello/Allsport

Vargas did trade shots with the Mexican veteran more frequently as the fight wore on, but he still came out on top in most of those exchanges. Defense has never been Campas' strong suit, and Vargas exploited that weakness to score with more than half his punches.

right eye. Vargas, 151, moved in for the finish, and though he pounded Campas, 151, effectively along the ropes, he learned that the iron-chinned warrior would not go as easily as had the 14 previous opponents he had dispatched in just 36 total rounds. Campas, whose right eye was not only cut, but swelling shut as well, came out for the fourth determined to make something happen. He started to goad Vargas into the slugfest he needed, and scored with a neck-snapping three-punch combination along the ropes. The champ finally started landing some of his famous bodyshots in the fifth, and though Vargas may have still done enough to keep his shutout going (one judge gave the fifth round to Campas), the style of the fight was beginning to turn.

But Vargas showed he could hold his own with Campas on the Mexican's terms, trading shot-for-shot with the heavy-handed champion at the moments when he forgot his prefight strategy. By the end of the sixth round, Campas' nose was broken, his right eye was just a bloody slit, and he seemed to be contemplating throwing in the towel. Nonetheless, he came out for the seventh round, giving himself one last opportunity for a miracle, and giving Vargas a chance to put a definitive stamp on his performance. A right hand sent Campas' mouthpiece flying, and Vargas unleashed an assault in the champion's own corner until referee Eddie Cotton sensed a lull in the action and allowed Campas, now bleeding heavily from his lower lip, to put his mouthpiece back in. Another short right to the jaw dislodged Campas' mouthpiece again, and Vargas teed off until the bell rang. Campas, 72-3 (62), waved his glove to indicate he'd had enough, and the emotional Vargas, who had cried tears of joy when he found out the contract for this fight was signed, scaled the ropes, looked over toward his family, and shed his first tears as world champion.

Photo by Al Bello/Allsport

Campas' right eye started puffing in the first round and bleeding in the third, and a broken nose and bloody lip also contributed to his decision to throw in the towel.

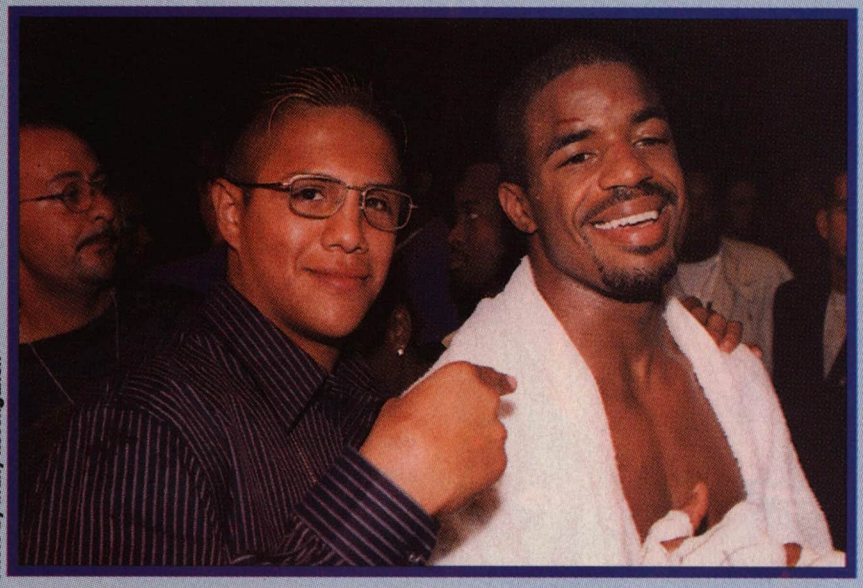


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Vargas was on hand to congratulate Olympic teammate David Reid after Reid's win over James Coker in October. The two junior middleweights' paths are likely to cross within the next couple years, providing both fighters with blockbuster paydays.

"I've been waiting for this day since I was 10 years of age, when I first put on the gloves," Vargas said afterward. "Some people say it's all happening real fast, but it could never be fast enough for me to become world champion. For every fighter, the dream is to become world champion. I can say tomorrow, if I don't fight again, I was world champion, and nobody can ever take that away from me. I can't even believe I'm world champion right now."

The CompuBox statistics were just as lopsided as the fight appeared to be. Vargas landed 202 of 403 punches, a connect percentage of just over 50 percent, compared to 76 of 259 (29 percent) for Campas. The key difference was in the jab numbers, as the new champion from Oxnard, California, landed five times as many as his opponent. Afterward, Campas held his conqueror in an embrace and whispered words of praise in his ear.

"He was telling me that he didn't expect me to be that quick and strong," Vargas recalled. "And he said that I'm going to be champion for a long time, which, coming from a guy like that, that's something big. He said he couldn't hit me, and I wasn't about to let him. I worked very hard for this fight. I know a lot of people didn't think I could do it, but that's what kind of even drove me more, the fact that a lot of people were saying it was too early. To make a great warrior like Yory Boy Campas quit, that's something big."

There are many levels of achievement

(Continued on page 74)

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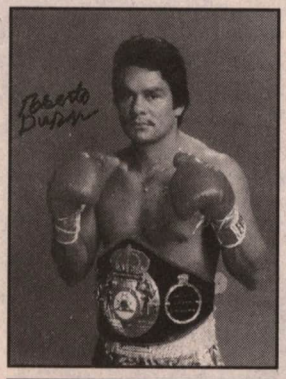

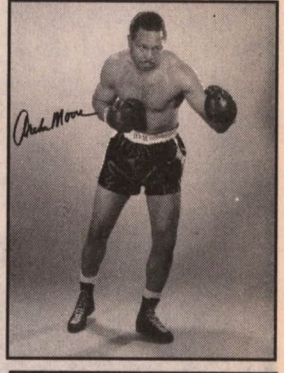

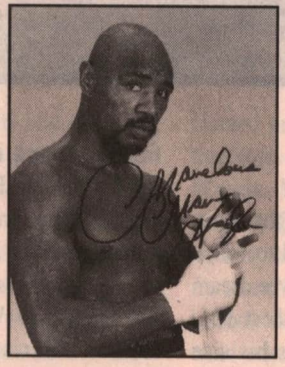

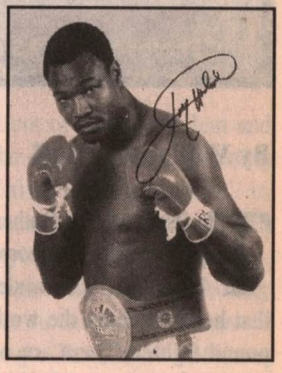

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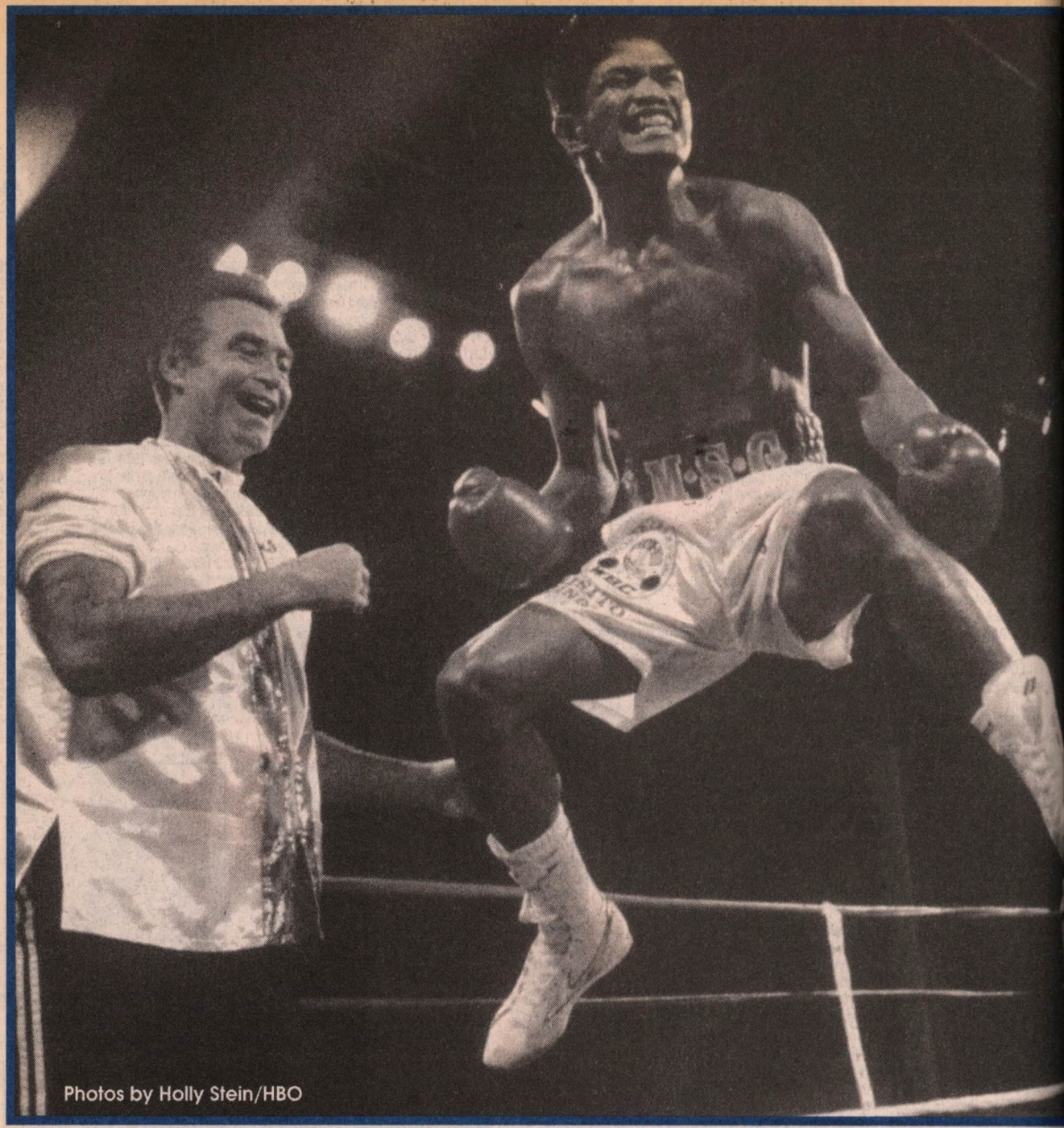


Photos by Holly Stein/HBO

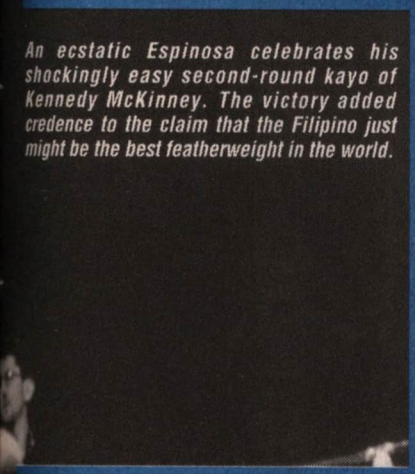
By William Dettloff

To look at WBC featherweight champion Luisito Espinosa and to watch him work, you would never dream that he is arguably the world's best 126-pound fighter. There are others his size who sport more natural talent and are more exciting. Certainly there are better hitters. Watch Freddie Norwood or Angel Vazquez time and again blow out an opponent with a single, well-aimed combination, and there can be no doubt that either fighter's punch is superior to Espinosa's. Watch Naseem Hamed or Derrick Gainer dazzle opponents with their speed and mobility, and it is clear that, by comparison, Espinosa is oafish. Even such tired warhorses as Wilfredo Vazquez and Hector Lizarraga, in their own ways, exhibit talents that, to the layman, appear to eclipse any that Espinosa wields.

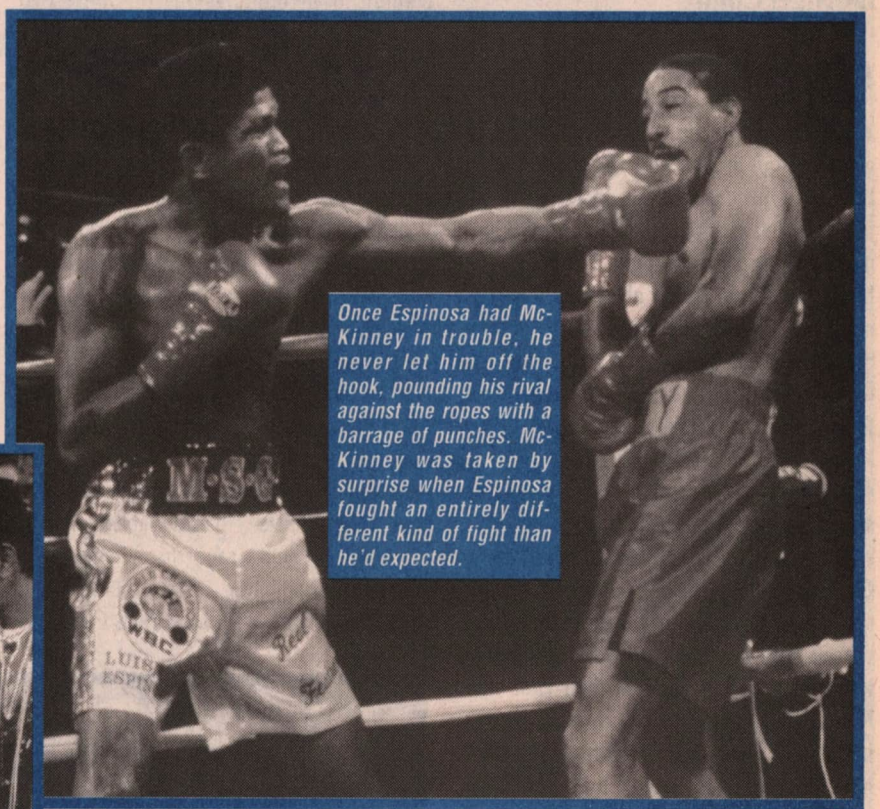
Yet, he keeps winning. Without consistently compelling power or blinding hand speed, without a glittering record or a loud, obnoxious entourage, he has entrenched himself as perhaps the best in his division, and there are those who will tell you that's been the case for at least the last three years. The same guys will tell you outright that Hamed would marry Brendan Ingle before he'd face Espinosa in the ring, and not just because there are bigger fights for more money and far less risk out there for "The Prince." It's because even though Espinosa doesn't bring the biggest or flashiest guns, he is the fight game's resident chameleon. No matter your style, Espinosa has a style to beat you, and if he

CHAMELEON TO ONE!

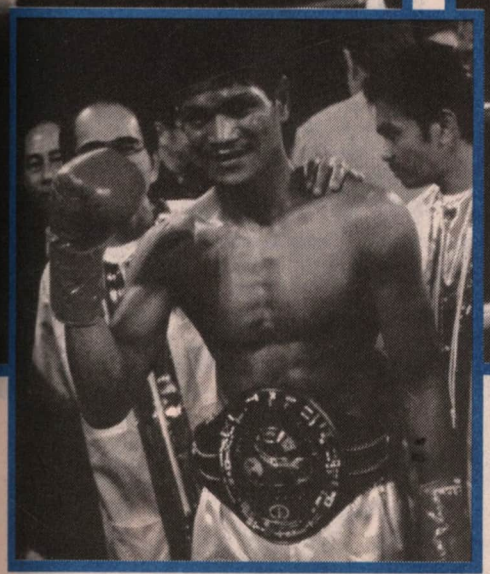
Versatile Espinosa Defies The Odds And Extends His Reign



An ecstatic Espinosa celebrates his shockingly easy second-round kayo of Kennedy McKinney. The victory added credence to the claim that the Filipino just might be the best featherweight in the world.



Once Espinosa had McKinney in trouble, he never let him off the hook, pounding his rival against the ropes with a barrage of punches. McKinney was taken by surprise when Espinosa fought an entirely different kind of fight than he'd expected.



Like all 126-pounders, Espinosa hopes to lure undefeated Naseem Hamed into the ring with him. Some experts think the veteran WBC champion's versatility would lead to "The Prince's" downfall.

doesn't when the contract is signed, you can be sure that between the time the ink dries and the bell rings for the first round, he'll come up with one. When it comes to re-inventing himself and adjusting his style as opponents warrant, there probably isn't a better fighter within 50 pounds. Ask Kennedy McKinney.

Going into his fight with Espinosa in November, McKinney had to feel pretty good about his chances. Big deal that he was moving up from junior featherweight to feather. "King" was still riding high off his December 1997 upset kayo of Junior Jones, and undoubtedly had his confidence bedrocked when on three different occasions, according to various reports, Hamed pulled out of fights with him and then took on the decidedly less threatening Wayne McCullough. Meanwhile, in August, Espinosa tired late and struggled against neophyte Juan Carlos Ramirez. Early on, he taught the youngster a boxing lesson, but after the ninth, his 32-year-old wind started to go. Then, in the 11th, and very conveniently indeed, a headbutt ripped open his left eyebrow, and when they went to the cards, the sly one had retained the title for the sixth time.

So you couldn't blame McKinney or

(Continued on page 76)

ROBINSON-GATTI II

"Mighty" Ivan Does It Again ... And Looks To Something Sweeter

By Nigel Collins

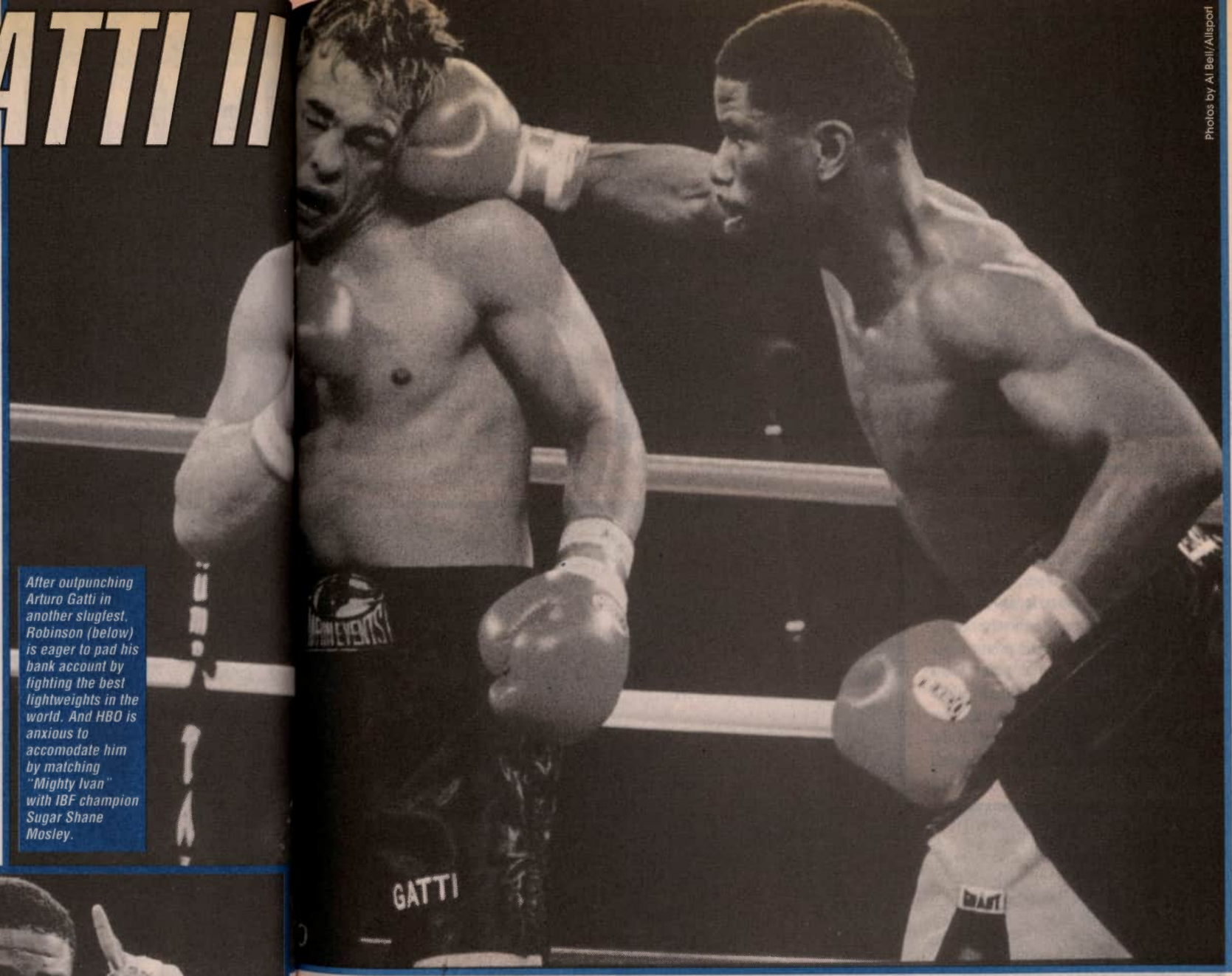
Sugar Shane Mosley says that he's in a "Roy Jones situation," that there's nobody in the lightweight division good enough to give him a tough fight and that he'll probably have to move up to junior welterweight to find a worthy opponent. And he might be right. But before the brilliant IBF champion abandons the 135-pound division, there appears to be at least one intriguing challenger remaining: an unlikely looking, shallow-chested boxer from Philadelphia named "Mighty" Ivan Robinson.

Robinson, 27-2 (10), confirmed his stature as a legitimate threat to Mosley's supremacy with a repeat win over Arturo Gatti in another edge-of-your-seat thriller that had old-timers once more recalling classic brawls from bygone eras. Although it wasn't quite as good as their first war, Robinson-Gatti II was electrifying enough in its own right to leave fans hungry for more. But don't look for a third encounter anytime soon. Gatti, following his third consecutive loss, is overdue for a couple of rebuilding bouts, and Robinson is eager to move up to the next financial plateau.

"It's about money. Whoever is gonna bring money to the table, that's who Ivan Robinson wants to fight," said Robinson, who reportedly earned $400,000 for the second Gatti fight. "If we can get the top dollar that we want, and it's Shane Mosley or [WBC champion Cesar] Bazan or [WBA titlist Jean-Baptiste] Mendy, we'll fight 'em all."

Immediately after the fight, Robinson's manager, Eddie Woods, wasn't ready to commit to anything, saying that after two tough fights, his man needed a long rest. Wise decision. But that doesn't mean the wheels of boxing stop turning. HBO Sports Vice President Lou DiBella said Mosley-Robinson is the fight he wants, presuming Sugar Shane was successful in his January 9 defense against overmatched Golden Johnson. And with HBO's sizable checkbook backing him up, DiBella usually gets what he wants.

Ironically, Robinson had been scheduled to fight Mosley in June 1998, but suffered a cut in training and had to withdraw. Anxious to make up for the lost payday, he accepted a match with Gatti in August and beat the New Jersey-based Canadian in an incredible punch-a-thon that changed the course of Robinson's career. Naturally, there were skeptics who claimed that Gatti



Photos by Al Bell/Allsport

After outpunching Arturo Gatti in another slugfest, Robinson (below) is eager to pad his bank account by fighting the best lightweights in the world. And HBO is anxious to accomodate him by matching "Mighty Ivan" with IBF champion Sugar Shane Mosley.

was out of shape and that Robinson would never be able to duplicate what he'd done the first time. And when you take into consideration Gatti's history and tremendous popularity, it's no wonder that a lot of people who should have known better were picking Gatti to reverse the outcome. Gatti couldn't afford to lose, they said. His status as an HBO fighter was at stake. But what so many forgot was that Robinson couldn't afford to lose either. After all, he'd barely tasted the big money that comes with fighting on HBO. Gatti had been a star since beating Tracy Patterson for the IBF junior lightweight title in December '95.

But as soon as the opening bell of the December 12 rematch rang, it became obvious that the first fight had been no fluke. Rounds one and two were virtually all Robinson. He snapped Gatti's ever-available head back every time he threw a jab, and occasionally mixed in a sharp right cross or a crisp left hook for good measure. Gatti stayed on top of him, and managed to plant a couple of solid bodyshots in the second, but when they answered the bell for the third, Gatti was already two rounds down on all three official scorecards and leaking blood from a cut over his left eye. So what else is new?

But despite his many wars, Gatti is not yet a spent force. He stormed out of his corner in the third and jumped right on Robinson, hurting him with a right to the head and a series of combinations to the body. This was close to prime-time Gatti, and Robinson was in trouble. He survived the onslaught, however, and flurried back

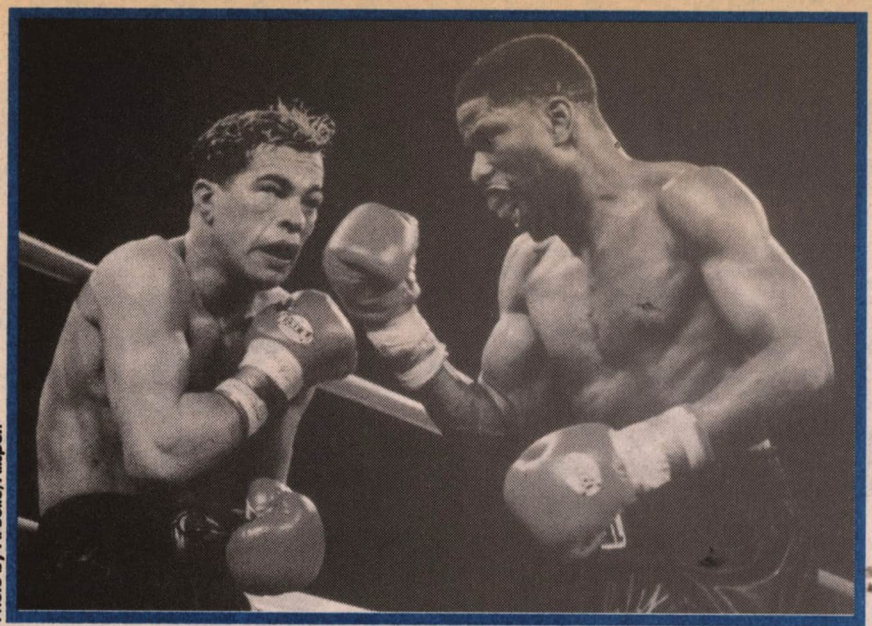


Photo by Al Bello/Allsport

As in their first encounter, the Robinson-Gatti fight was a thriller. But also like their first fight, it was Robinson who dished out most of the punishment en route to a close points victory.

"I learned from the first fight that when you hurt Arturo, it makes him mad and makes him go deeper and come back stronger," said Robinson, who knows as much about Gatti's amazing resilience as anybody. "So I paced myself. I hurt him a lot. He was desperate; he knew he had to win, so he wasn't going nowhere. He stood in front of me and he came right back, but I was ready. I ain't worried about knocking nobody out. My whole strategy is to pile up the points. As [Robinson's trainer] Butch [Cathay] says, 'Get the rounds in the bank.'"

Although they kept trading at a fast clip, it took a couple of rounds for both men to fully recover from the scorching pace of the third. But in the sixth, Gatti exploded again, hurting Robinson with bodyshots and a booming right to the head. This time, Robinson didn't mount a counter offensive, and it looked like Gatti might be on his way to another miracle. Besides lashing out with one powerpunch after another, he also unveiled a new defensive maneuver, dipping deep at the knees, a la Pernell Whitaker, which caused some of his antagonist's counters to sail harmlessly over his head.

Gatti duck a punch? What's this world coming to? But wouldn't you just know it. Robinson had anticipated something just like that would happen.

"The first thing on my mind was what can Arturo do differently," Robinson said. "And when we found out that he had

with a series of accurate combinations. This was what the near-capacity crowd of 4,396 at the Trump Taj Mahal's Mark G. Etess Arena had come to see, and roars of approval rocked the room. It was an extraordinary three minutes of non-stop action. Both men stood in the other's power zone, trading shot for shot. At one point, Gatti looked ready to go, but he refused to fold and fired back on feet of clay, so intent on going down swinging, he was back in the fight when the bell ended one of the best rounds of the year.

Photo by Frank Vitucci

Gatti attacked Robinson's midsection throughout the fight, but many of his shots strayed below the belt, forcing the referee to deduct a point. Without the penalty, the fight would have been a draw.

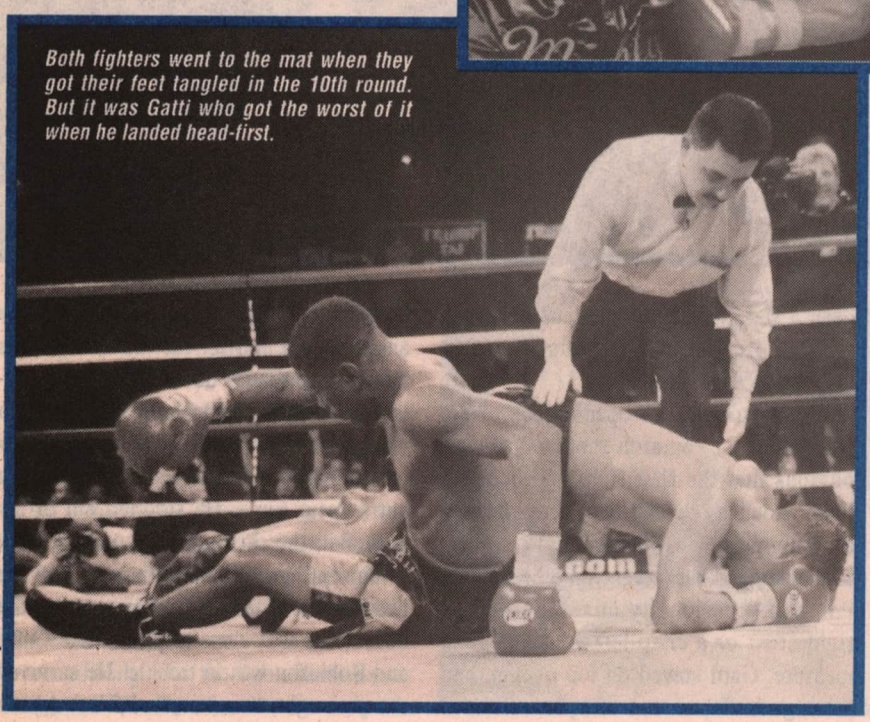


Photo by Frank Vitucci

Both fighters went to the mat when they got their feet tangled in the 10th round. But it was Gatti who got the worst of it when he landed head-first.

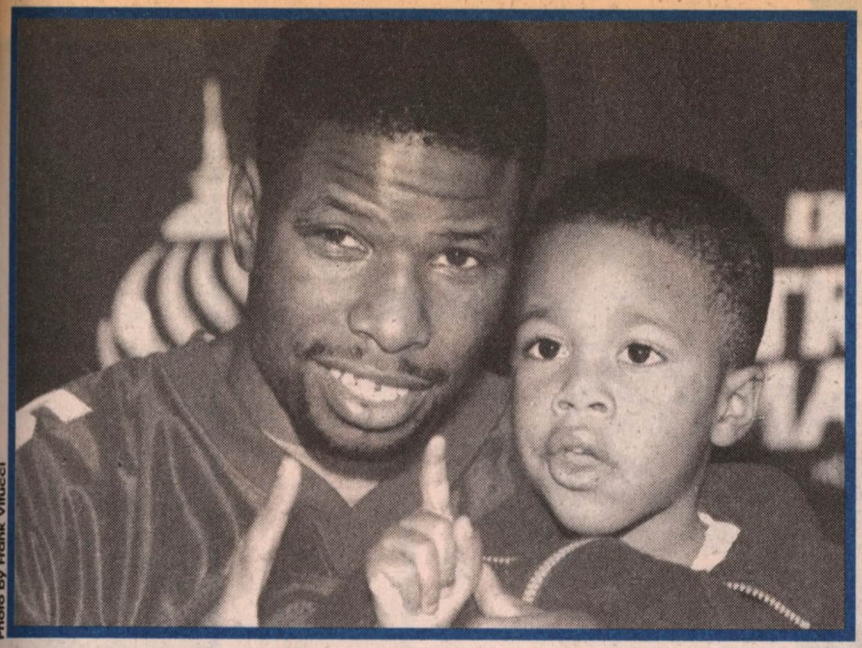


Photo by Frank Vitucci

Who's number one? My dad's number one. Ivan Robinson Sr. and Jr. share the spotlight at the postfight press conference after the senior Robinson's second victory over Gatti.

Ronnie Shields in his corner, I figured there was going to be a lot more head movement because of the background that Ronnie has with Pernell Whitaker. I know Pete was in camp with Arturo and giving him a lot of instructions. He gave me a lot of trouble moving his head, getting under me and things like that. But I still thought I was the better man."

The Philadelphian stole the seventh round with a sizzling, late-round rally that featured a cluster of flush headshots that whipped Gatti's head back and forth like a speedbag. Undeterred, Gatti bulled Robinson into the ropes in the eighth, planted his feet, and drove wicked hooks into his opponent's body. Although most of them landed in legal territory, enough slammed into Robinson's hips and protective cup to force referee Benji Estevez, who had warned Gatti several times earlier, to penalize him one point. What would have been a winning round for Gatti turned into a 9-9 stalemate on all three officials' scorecards.

"The low blows effected me a lot," said Robinson. "I know people are gonna say that he hit me to the body and he hurt me, but they didn't hurt as much as the low blows."

Even though both men were clearly feeling the effects of the grueling fight, Gatti, 29-4 (24), kept coming the last two rounds, outpunching Robinson and closing the scoring gap. But it was not enough. "I started too late again," said Gatti before skipping the postfight press conference so he could go to the hospital to have his eye attended to. It was the fourth straight fight he'd been too battered to talk to the press afterward, but the happy-go-lucky slugger did make an appearance at the postfight party a couple of hours later, where he chugged down a couple of well-deserved cold ones.

THE RING had Robinson ahead by a comfortable 96-93 margin (96-94 without the penalty). But the point deduction proved pivotal on the official cards, as judges George Colon and Joseph Pasquale both scored the fight 95-94 in Robinson's favor. Judge Jean Williams made it unanimous, coming up with a surprisingly wide 97-92 tally for Robinson.

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Most experts consider Mosley virtually unbeatable at 135-pounds, but Robinson has proved critics wrong before and is certainly the most attractive challenger Sugar Shane has among lightweight contenders.

"I thought the fight was close, but I thought I edged him," said Robinson. "The fight was a see-saw battle, but I knew where I was at all times. I was the quicker guy. I hit him more than he hit me. He was better than he was the first fight; I'll give him that. But he was dirty, too."

But in spite of the low blows and the passionate fury of the 20 rounds they have shared, there is a bond between Gatti and Robinson that only another fighter could fully understand. Before the start of the final round, as the pair came together for the traditional glove-touching ritual, Gatti leaned in close and whispered something into Robinson's ear.

"He told me that he loved me and that I was a warrior," revealed Robinson.

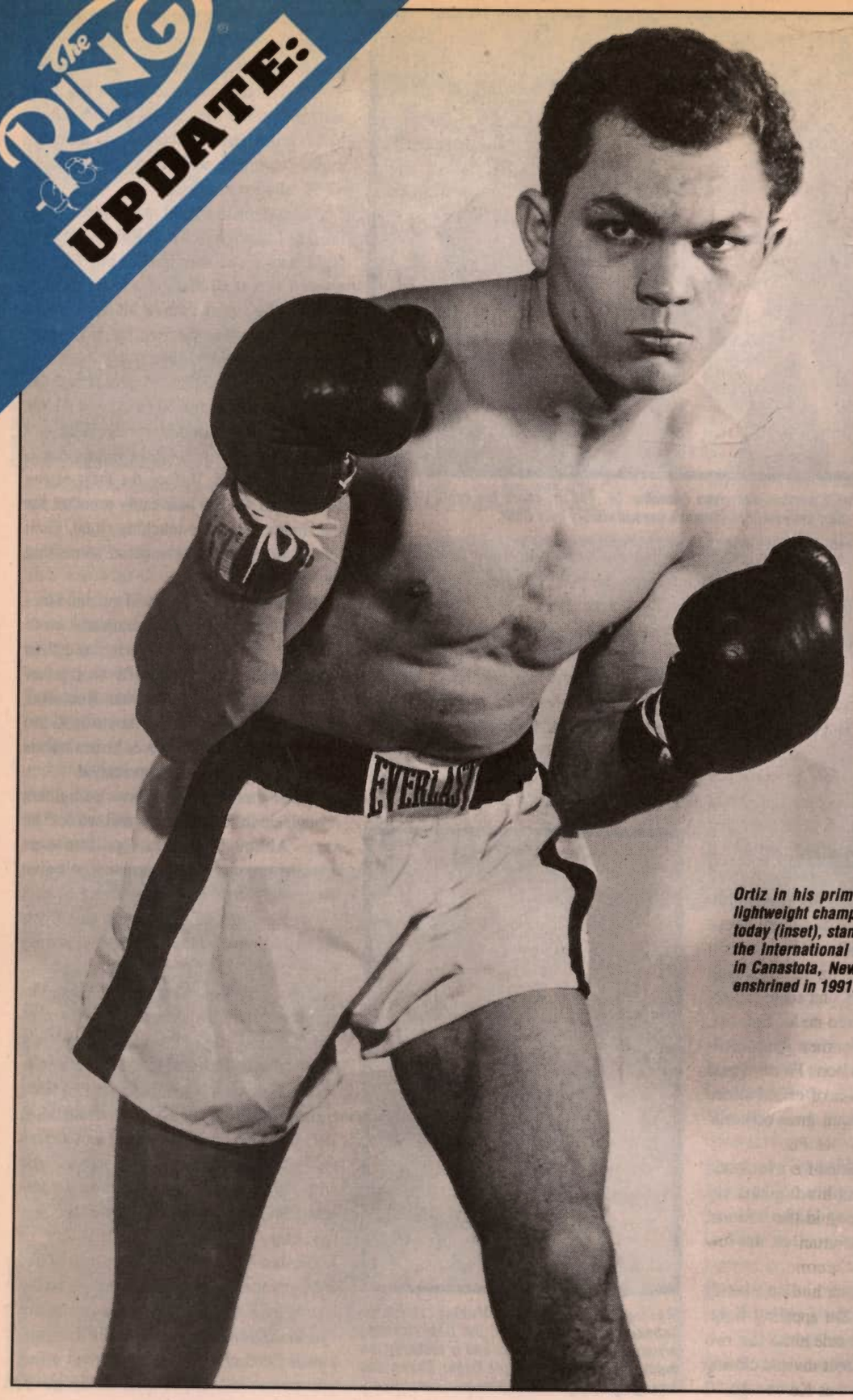
He'll have to be a warrior and then some to beat Mosley. The IBF champ carries a much harder punch than Robinson, as witnessed by his 28 knockouts in 30 pro starts. But Robinson believes he has talents that have yet to be fully appreciated.

"[The media] doesn't give us fighters enough credit for the things that we do," he said. "Although at times I get into wars with these guys, I still say you don't give me enough credit for my defense. I believe my defense helped me a lot in this fight, because if it didn't, he would have got me out of there."

True, Robinson does have excellent lateral movement and fine defensive skills, but he also has a history of getting involved in tit-for-tat slugfests nonetheless. That was evident not only in the two Gatti fights, but also in his 1995 bout with Demetrio Ceballos, when a lot a observers thought Robinson was lucky to escape with the decision after a 10-round blue-collar brawl at the Blue Horizon. His first title try, against Phillip Holiday in December '96, was also a slam-bam affair. But even though Robinson came out on the wrong end of the decision against the South African, it was an entertaining, punch-filled affair, and his spirited effort

(Continued on page 78)

The RING UPDATE:



Ortiz in his prime as the undisputed lightweight champion of the world, and today (inset), standing by his display at the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York, where he was enshrined in 1991.

CARLOS ORTIZ

"I Can Still Taste The Championship On My Lips"

By Brian Doogan

When Carlos Ortiz stared blankly from his stool and contemplated a life that could no longer count on boxing as its core, he knew the demons were planning an invasion. Fighting had been his life, his means of escaping the thugs who demeaned him growing up in New York because he was Puerto Rican. Fighting was also a way of escaping the impoverished lifestyle his family tried steadfastly to improve amid their squalid surroundings on Manhattan's East side between First and Second Avenue. Fiercely proud, boxing had made him somebody, while his own application and exceptional talent had made him a champion, one of the lightweight division's most accomplished. But now, as Ken Buchanan accepted the plaudits of the Madison Square Garden crowd, Ortiz sat there melancholic, aware his career was over but not knowing where next to turn. He was sinking into a bleak emptiness, heading toward oblivion.

Briefly, Ortiz had experienced something similar when he retired after losing the world title to Carlos Teo Cruz in Santo Domingo in June 1968. His only flirtation with the ring in the subsequent 3½ years was a 10-round points win over Edmundo Leite in November 1969. He had sought solace in the bottle and in his socializing with the ladies as he tried to dilute the bitter taste of anti-climax. Ortiz was overweight when he accepted the bout with the gifted Buchanan, an intense man driven by extreme levels of paranoia. The Scot had just lost the title to Roberto Duran, and was the only obstacle between Ortiz and a clash with the precocious and fierce Panamanian.

"When I returned, I knew I didn't have it anymore," Ortiz, as alert, energetic, and congenial today as he was in his fistic heyday, recalled recently in the lobby of a London hotel where he was one of the honored guests at the inaugural International Ex-Boxers' convention. "But I didn't feel the need to prove myself. I was just going to establish myself again where I had been before. And I had been successful. In nine fights from December 1971, I stopped eight and won the other on points, and I felt maybe I might do it. It got to the point where I was going to fight the champion, Duran, but he just didn't want it.

"I felt I was in great condition, the best shape of my life. Bull. Age is everything, and I was 36. But Duran is a fighter who would have come to me. I could just time it and let him run into my left jab. I wouldn't have had to exert myself. He would have been the perfect opponent. I trained hard for eight months, but at the end of all that, the fight didn't happen.

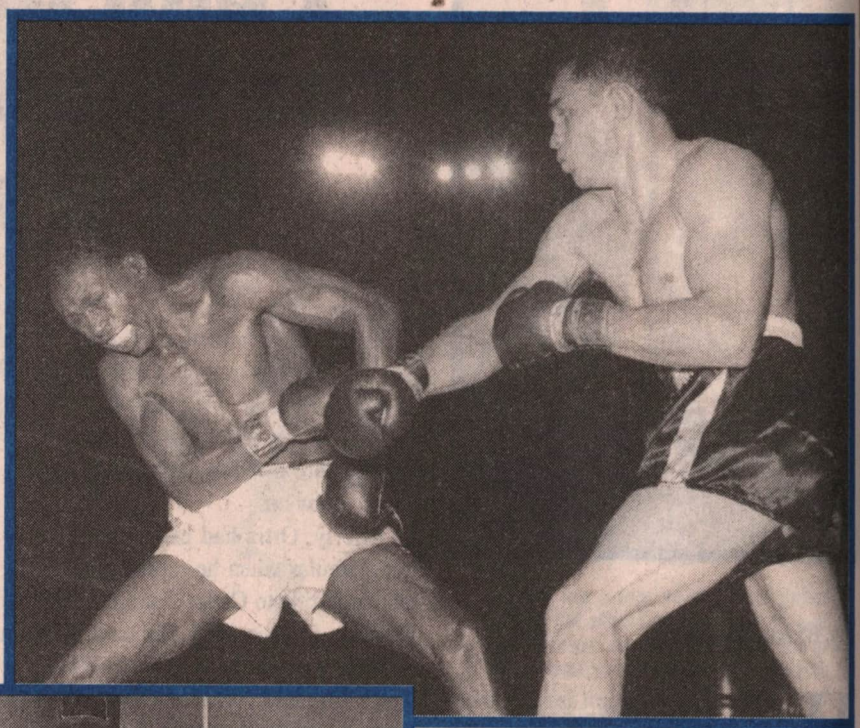
"Then Buchanan came along, a totally different kind of fighter, and I had no time to prepare, just three weeks. I was drinking and having big weight problems. Still, I was beating him, but for some reason I couldn't get myself up. I felt flat, and I had to quit after six rounds. A thyroid condition was diagnosed later, signaling the end of my boxing career. I knew that night, however, that it was over.

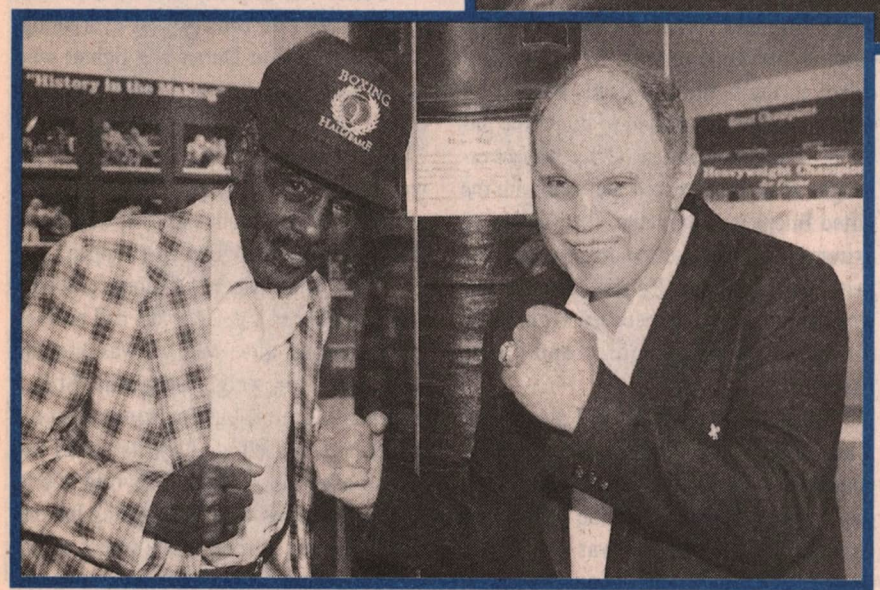
Ortiz' career came to a halt when Ken Buchanan stopped him at the end of the sixth round in September 1972. Soon afterward, Ortiz began hitting the bottle instead of opponents. Thankfully, he overcame the disease and has been sober for years now.

"I was devastated. Boxing had meant so much to me. It was everything. Suddenly, that thing I loved, I didn't have it to embrace anymore. I could no longer do what I had spent my entire life doing, and the realization of that, for me, led to a lot of problems."

The fundamental problem was his drift toward the drink that became exacerbated by the sudden absence of incentives to pull away from it. Boxing had provided that stimulus, but it was no longer there. To simplify his increasing dependency on alcohol into straightforward cause and effect is a fraught exercise, especially if the conclusion reached is that he merely craved a substitute for the drama that had been inherent to his existence. Alcoholism is a disease, and Ortiz realized that eventually he would either have to lick it or be licked.

"It got to the point where no one around me thought I'd be like this again—that I'd come through it to feel as well as I do—and nor did I," admitted Ortiz, now 62 and still recognizable as the 22-year-old who beat Kenny Lane for the world junior welterweight title in 1959 and later Joe Brown for the lightweight championship that he held throughout most of the '60s. "At first, I didn't recognize the problem. I wouldn't accept there was one.



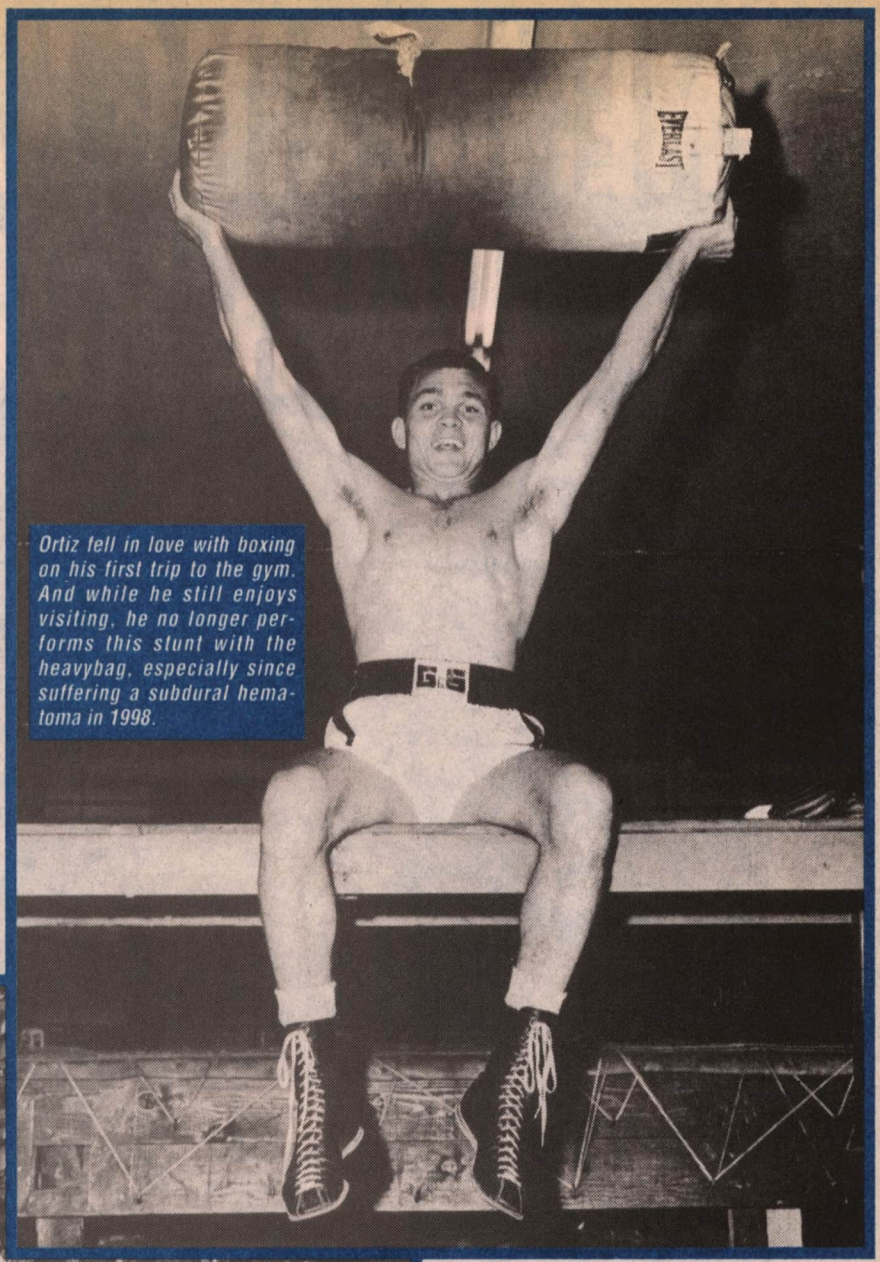


Ortiz won the world lightweight title in 1962 when he outpointed Joe Brown (above). Thirty-four years later they were reunited (left) at the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

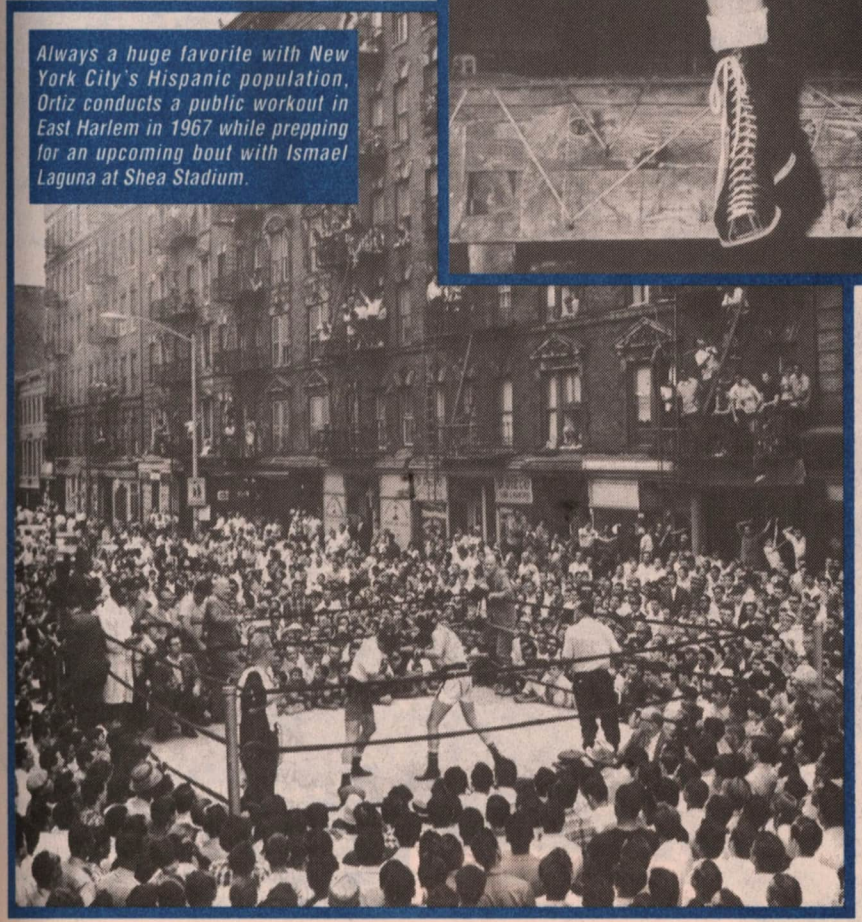
Finally, I booked myself in to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. That was a start, but that alone didn't do it. You need to put your faith in God, which is the most important part. You need to have someone you love who cares for you, who wants you to get well, who will do things for you to give you the strength. You cannot discount the influence of your wife. And you need to have the willpower from within. Without these three elements, you can't do it.

"My problem was with myself. I had to like myself again. I couldn't do any worthwhile job, because I had lost my self-esteem. But I needed something to occupy my mind. I decided to buy a cab, and the cab business became crucial to my rehabilitation.

"One thing you can't do in the cab industry is drink. If you are a responsible person, if you care for your brothers and sisters, your fellow human beings, you won't drink while you drive on the road. I drove a cab for about 10 years. In that time, I had one accident. Around 4:30 one morning, as I was returning home, a drunk driver rammed into the back of me. The cab was destroyed. But I never had any problems with customers. And I could navigate my way around New York because I knew it so well from my childhood. I went through about 10 years of sobriety, which was beautiful, and when I decided I was able to handle my own affairs, I left. I sold the cab. I don't know when it was; I don't think about it. It's something that's there, a part of my life. But I don't dwell on it at all. It was something I had to do, not something I wanted to do."



Ortiz fell in love with boxing on his first trip to the gym. And while he still enjoys visiting, he no longer performs this stunt with the heavybag, especially since suffering a subdural hematoma in 1998.



Always a huge favorite with New York City's Hispanic population, Ortiz conducts a public workout in East Harlem in 1967 while prepping for an upcoming bout with Ismael Laguna at Shea Stadium.

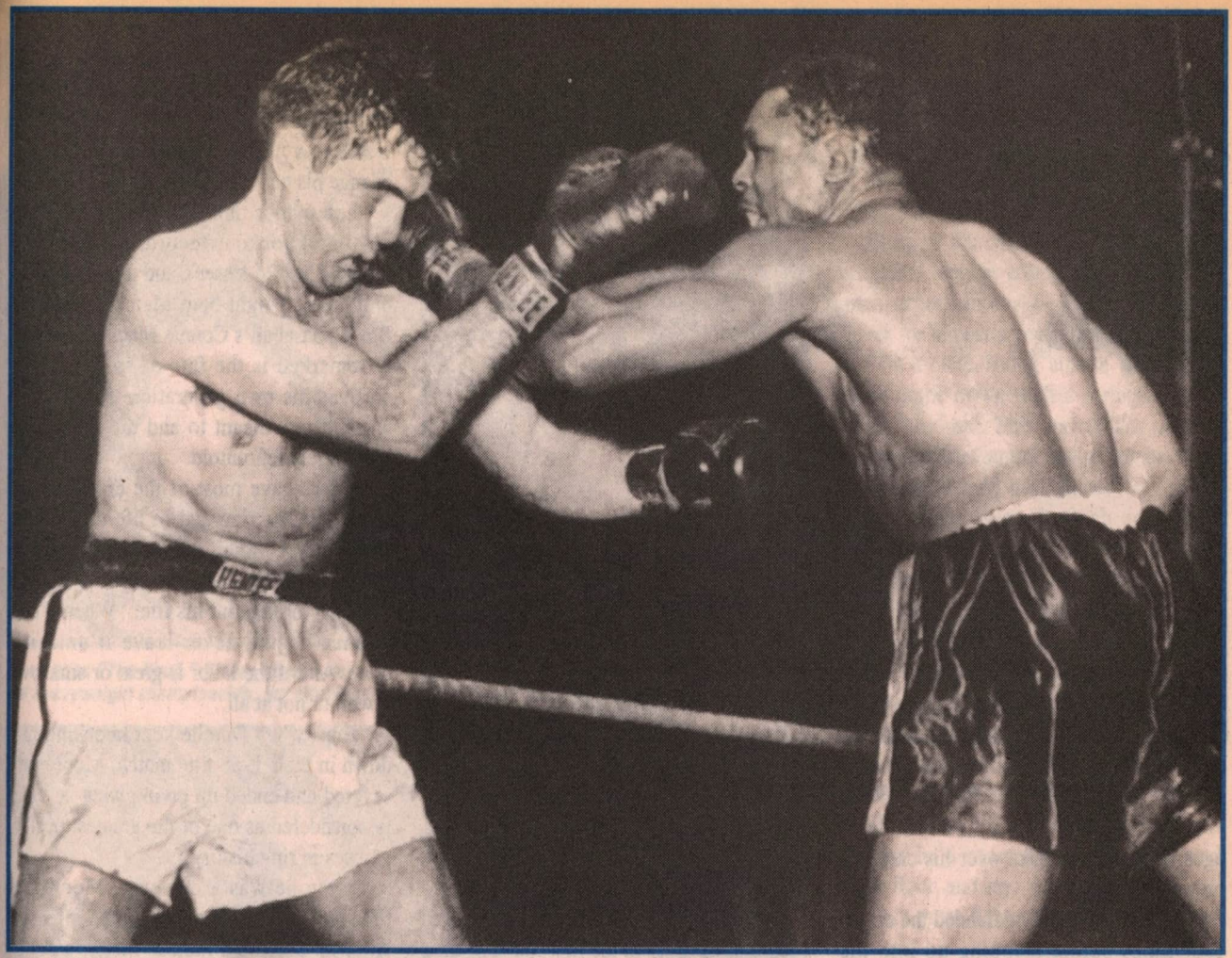
From the moment Ortiz took his first uneasy steps into the Madison Square Boys Club at the age of 10, all he ever wanted to do was box. To listen to Ortiz tell you how he was seduced by boxing and the intoxicating culture of the gym is to be transported almost to some mystical enlightenment. His eyes at that moment are focused on the scene in that gym. Fifty years, a lifetime later, he can still remember every detail, the noise of a young boy thumping the heavybag, the rat-a-tat rhythm of the speedball, the tapping of feet skipping rope, the noise of blows and heavy breathing in the ring, the smell of sweat as pungent as a log fire, the whole ambience of an environment that stimulates excitement and drama. Enthu-

(Continued on page 78)

REMEMBERING KAYO KING ARCHIE MOORE

His Wisdom Went Beyond The Ring

Moore was perhaps the most urbane and well-spoken man to ever win a boxing championship. He charmed the media throughout his career with witty repartee and an intuitive knack for public relations.



Moore had to wait until his 170th pro bout before getting at crack a world title. When he finally got light heavyweight champion Joey Maxim into the ring with him in 1952, "Ancient Archie" won the belt via 15-round decision.

By Pete Ehrmann

Precisely how old Archie Moore was when he passed away on December 9 at a hospice near his San Diego, California, home is a mystery. But absolutely beyond question or dispute is that the former light heavyweight champion was one of the most remarkable and talented men to ever make a living with his fists. His mouth and intellect, too.

Born Archibald Lee Wright in Benoit, Mississippi, the man whose last name was changed to Moore by the aunt and uncle who raised him contradicted his own mother when she said that the year of his birth was 1913. Moore always insisted it happened three years later.

"Maybe I was three years old when I was born, and if that's so, then I should know," Moore said.

Age was the least meaningful statistic anyway for the boxer whose caginess earned him the nickname "The Mongoose." Moore won the 175-pound title when he was at least 37 years old, never lost it in the ring, and put on boxing gloves for the last time in 1965. Other numbers carry more weight. Of the at least 229 professional bouts on record for Moore (boxing historians disagree on the exact number), 141 of them were won by knockout. No other person in boxing history has ever amassed so many kayos. Yet, Moore was a ring scientist, not a sledge hammer.

"He really wasn't a knockout puncher," said Mike Fitzgerald, a writer from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, currently working on a Moore biography due out next year. "It's just that he had so many fights." The widely anthologized former New York newspaper columnist W.C. Heinz, editor of the prized *Fireside Book Of Boxing* and author of *The Professional*, usually referred to as the best novel ever written about boxing, recalled Moore as "the most scientific of the fighters of my time and, outside the ropes, the most inventive."

It was the science and artistry of fighting that enthralled Moore, both as a participant and an observer. "If I saw two fellows whaling away at each other in the street, I wouldn't even turn around for a second look," he said in '91. "But if I saw one of them jabbing and feinting and slipping punches, why, I'd turn my car right around."

Moore spent almost 30 years as a professional prize fighter—beginning during the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt and finishing when Lyndon B. Johnson occupied the White House. But he was not given an opportunity to fight for the world championship until he'd been fighting professionally for more than 15 years. Then he got only about $800 for winning a decision over champion Joey Maxim on December 17, 1952, and before the fight had to agree to let Maxim's man-

A victim of racial prejudice throughout much of his life, Moore poses beside a bust of civil rights pioneer George Washington Carver in Diamond, Missouri.

ager, Jack Kearns, take over his career if he won the title.

Moore successfully defended the crown four times before stepping up into the heavyweight class for a crack at the championship held by Rocky Marciano on September 21, 1955. Before almost 70,000 fans at Yankee Stadium in New York City, Moore had Marciano on the floor in the second round, but the champion came back to stop him in the ninth. On November 30, 1956, Moore was knocked out by Floyd Patterson in the fifth round of their Chicago match for the heavyweight title Marciano had vacated.

But using the secret "Aborigine Diet" he claimed to have learned during a 1940s boxing stint in Australia, along with his self-taught sciences of "relaxism" and "escapism," Moore was able to keep defending his 175-pound title against all comers through '62, when recognition of him as champion was withdrawn by the ring governing bodies.

He had some close calls, however, the most famous of which occurred when Canadian challenger Yvon Durelle floored Moore three times in the first round of their title fight on December 10, 1958. Knocked down again in round five, Moore nevertheless stopped Durelle in the 11th round of the bout that earned him the Edward J. Neil Award as Fighter of the Year.

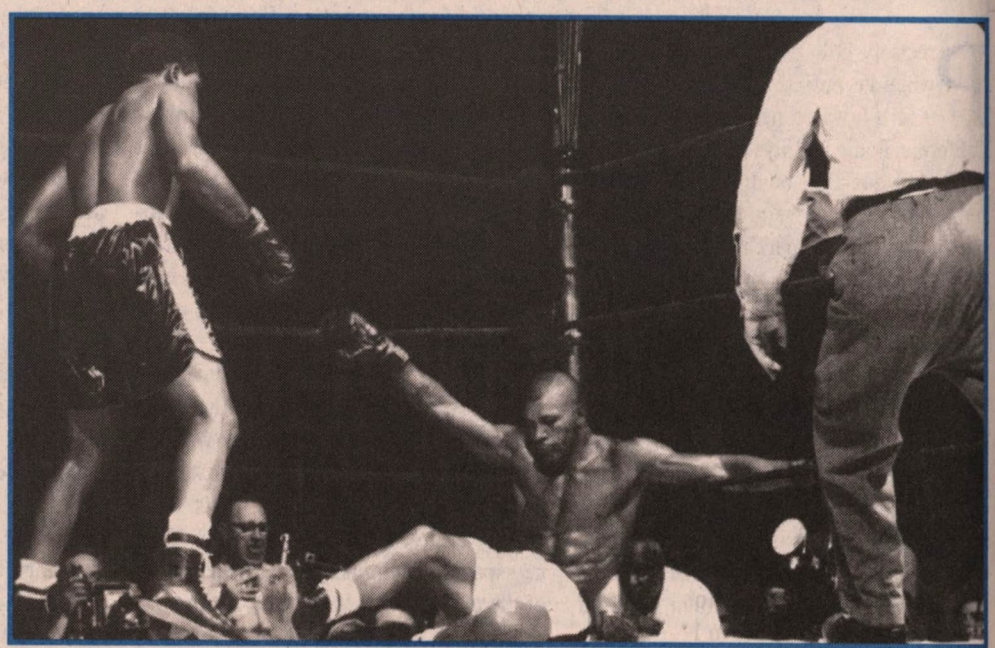
Moore's last big match was on November 15, 1962, when he was knocked out by Cassius Clay, who would win the world heavyweight title two years later and change his name to Muhammad Ali.

Newspaper obituaries noted Moore's all-time knockout record, his 194 wins (against just 26 losses), and that he was the only man to fight both Marciano and Ali. But, as baseball's Connie Mack once grimly remarked is the fate of someone who outlives his own generation, the story of what Moore meant to and did for boxing was largely left untold.

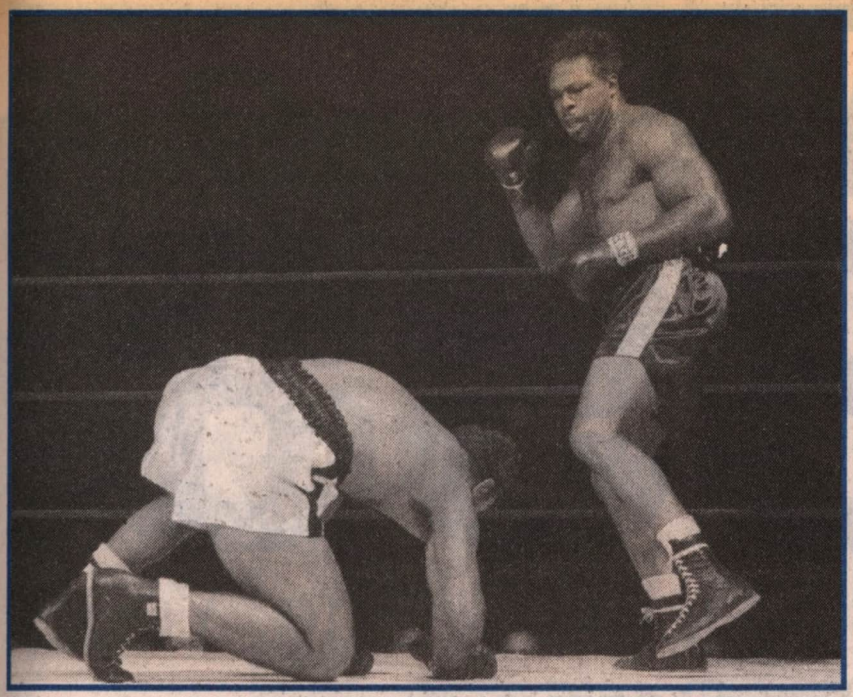
Moore gave most of the credit for his success in the ring and in life to his aunt, Willie Pearl Moore, who, when he was a boy, drummed into him a poem that he repeated throughout his life: "When a task is once begun, never leave it until it's done. And if the labor is great or small, do it well or not at all."

Thus, when Durelle kept knocking him down in their 1958 title match, Moore persevered and ended up giving what is widely considered as one of the greatest performances in ring history.

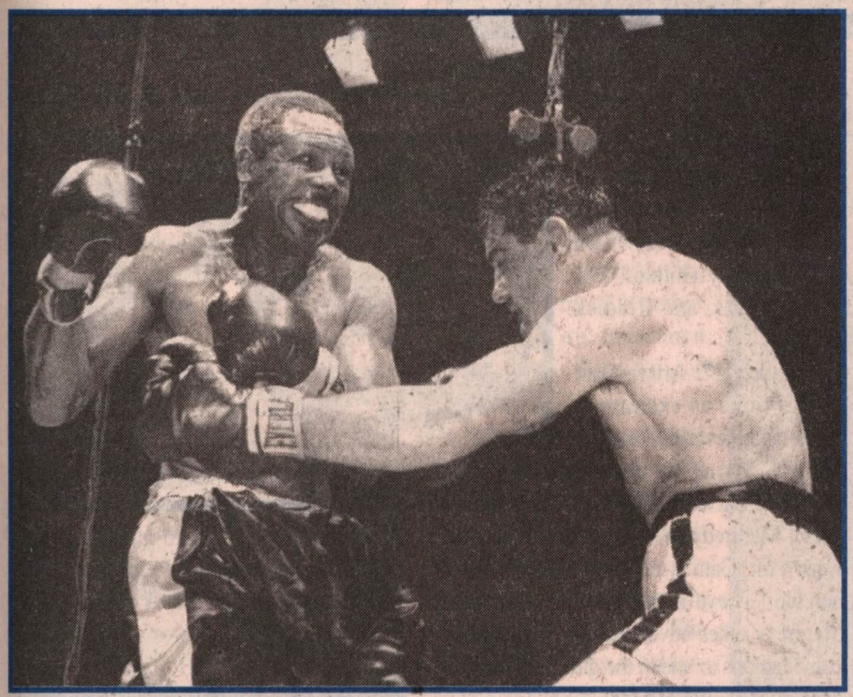
When he was a teenager, Moore did time in a reformatory for assorted offenses. After he became a famous boxer, a politician asked him how he had overcome juvenile delinquency. "Easy," replied Moore, always the feinter, the slipper, the charmer. "I grew up."



Moore's 14th-round knockout of Harold Johnson at Madison Square Garden in 1954 was the fifth and final fight of their series. Moore beat his fellow Hall of Famer four out of five times.



Down goes "The Rock." Moore floored Rocky Marciano in the second round of his 1955 bid to win the heavyweight championship, but Marciano beat the count and rallied to stop Moore in the ninth.



In his final defense of the light heavyweight title, Moore outpointed Italian challenger Giulio Rinaldi on June 10, 1961. The following year, in his last major fight, Moore lost to Muhammad Ali.

Exactly when he began boxing for pay is not known for certain. Fitzgerald has exhumed reports of several bouts not included on his published record, which lists Moore's debut in early-1936. It was once reported that Mickey Walker, the Roaring '20s middleweight champion, claimed Moore had sparred with him in 1927.

Moore first broke into THE RING's ratings as a middleweight in 1940, after a sensational tour of Australia, where he defeated contender Ron Richards and, according to Moore, learned the aborigine trick of chewing the juice out of meat and discarding the pulp to lose weight.

"May I point out that chewing without swallowing is not easy?" he later wrote. "It is agony, and it will nearly drive you crazy not to swallow a succulent cut of meat. And at first, I was a constant back-slider, gulping down an occasional morsel, but my will to lose weight was stronger than my taste buds, and now I can use this method with no qualms."

When anyone questioned the legitimacy of this system, Moore had a simple reply: "Have you ever seen a fat aborigine?"

Early in his career, ulcers were also a problem—severe enough to send Moore into surgery in early-1941 and stall his career for almost a year. "I was puzzled as to how a clean-living athlete like myself could come down with a serious case of ulcers," he said. The answer was tension, worry, and frustration, and to combat them Moore developed his sciences of "relaxism" and "escapism," which he demonstrated for Heinz when they were working on a piece for the *Saturday Evening Post* before the Marciano fight.

"I would interview him starting at 9 a.m.," Heinz said, "when he would appear at my digs, sit on the sofa, and say: 'Next question.' After an hour of that he would say: 'Give me 10.' He'd stretch out and immediately drop off to sleep. At the end of 10 minutes, I'd shake him by the shoulder, and he'd sit up, swing his feet around to the floor, and say: 'Next question.'"

Only great fighters beat Moore. Ezzard

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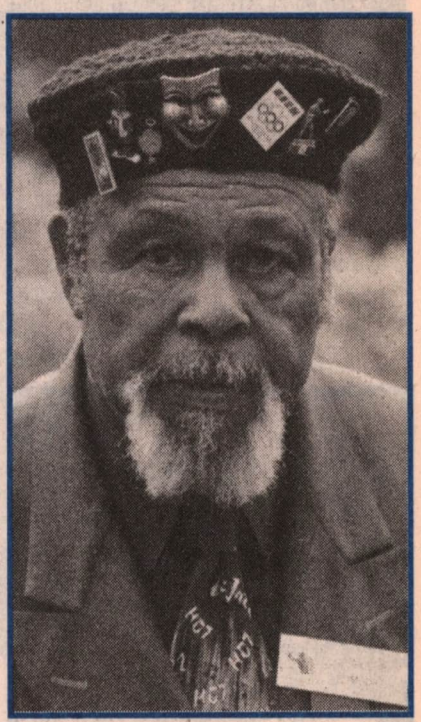


Moore as he looked when he visited the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1996. He retained an active role in the boxing community until the last few years of his life.

DIARY OF 1998

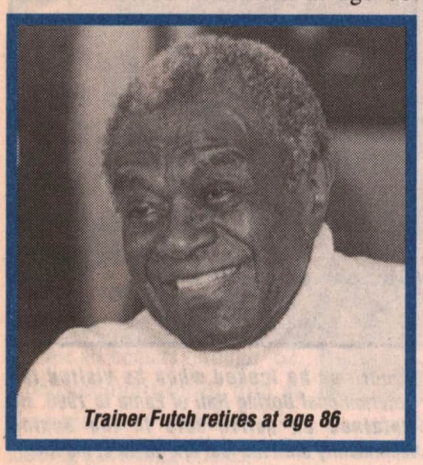
The Ring Reviews The Year In Boxing

Compiled by D.E. Thomas

January 4: Trainer Joe "Buffalo" Martin dies at age 38 in an auto accident in Spain. Three-division former champion Julio Cesar Chavez and two-division former champion Azumah Nelson are among the fighters he trained. Among the 21 world champions he trained in his 62-year career as a cornerman were Joe Frazier, Ken Norton, Larry Holmes, Michael Spinks, and Riddick Bowe.

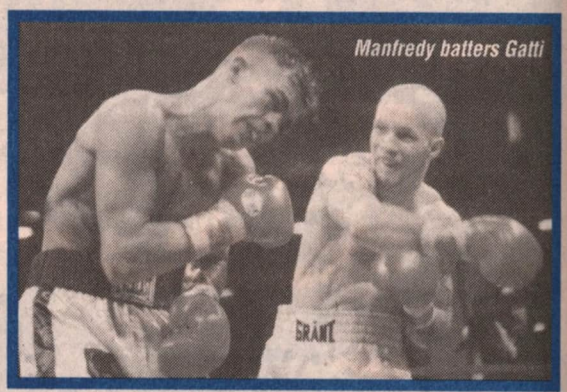
January 6: Japan-based Russian Yuri Arbachakov, age 31, retires with a 23-1 (16) pro record. He won the WBC flyweight title in June '92 and made nine successful title defenses before falling to Chatchai Dutchboy Gym in November '97.

January 12: Hall of Fame trainer Eddie Futch, who was honored by THE RING as the best trainer in the last 75 years, announces his retirement at age 86.



Trainer Futch retires at age 86

January 17: Arturo Gatti proves to be as exciting in defeat as he ever has been in victory, losing by eighth-round technical knockout to Angel Manfredy in Atlantic City in a lightweight tilt. Gatti is cut over his always-vulnerable left eye in the opening round, and Manfredy takes advantage by firing snappy combinations to widen the gash and keep the dangerous warrior at bay.

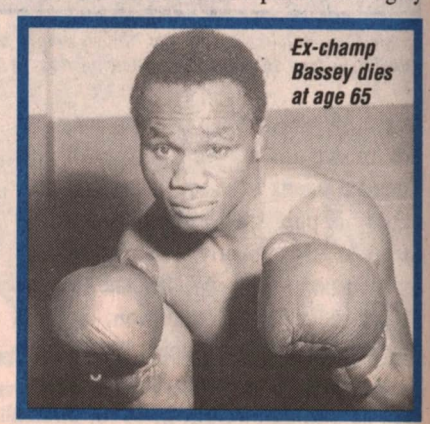


Manfredy batters Gatti

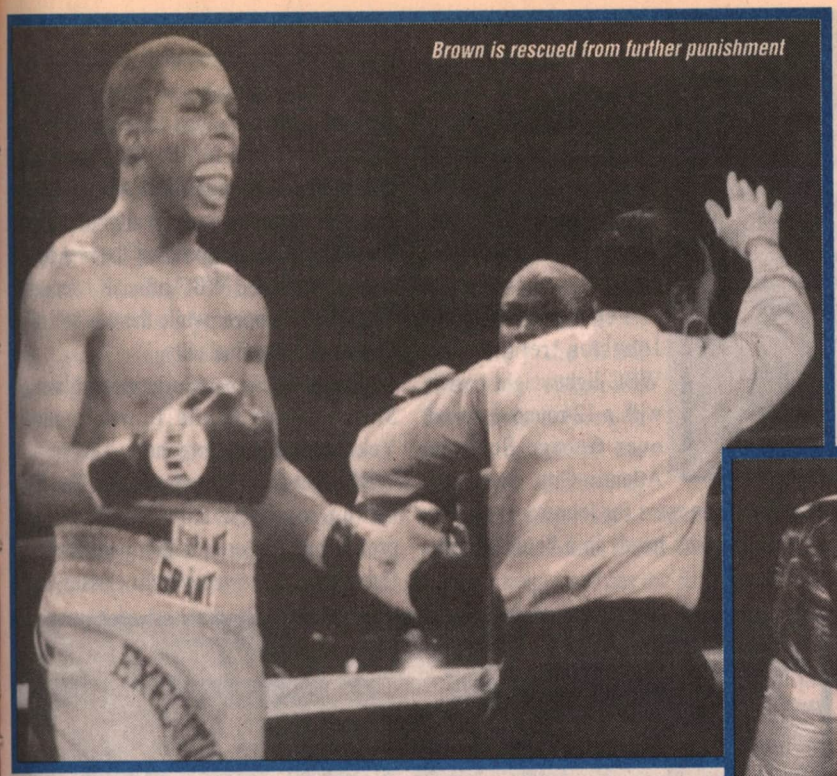
January 19: Junior bantamweight Hipolito "Polo" Saucedo, 29, is found shot to death in an automobile in Houston, Texas, an apparent suicide.

January 26: Former featherweight champion Hogan "Kid" Bassey, 65, dies in his native Nigeria. Bassey, 59-13-2 (21), became his country's first world champion in 1955, but lost the title to Davey Moore in his second defense. He retired after losing a rematch and coached Nigeria's amateur national team.

January 31: Bernard Hopkins retains the IBF middleweight title in Atlantic City with a sixth-round knockout of former welterweight and junior middleweight titlist Simon Brown. Hopkins thoroughly

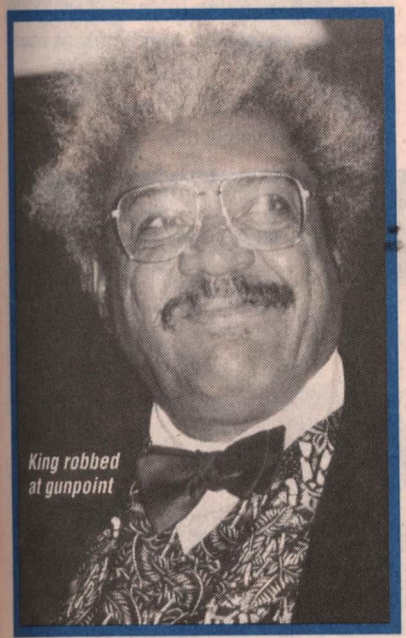


Ex-champ Bassey dies at age 65


Brown is rescued from further punishment

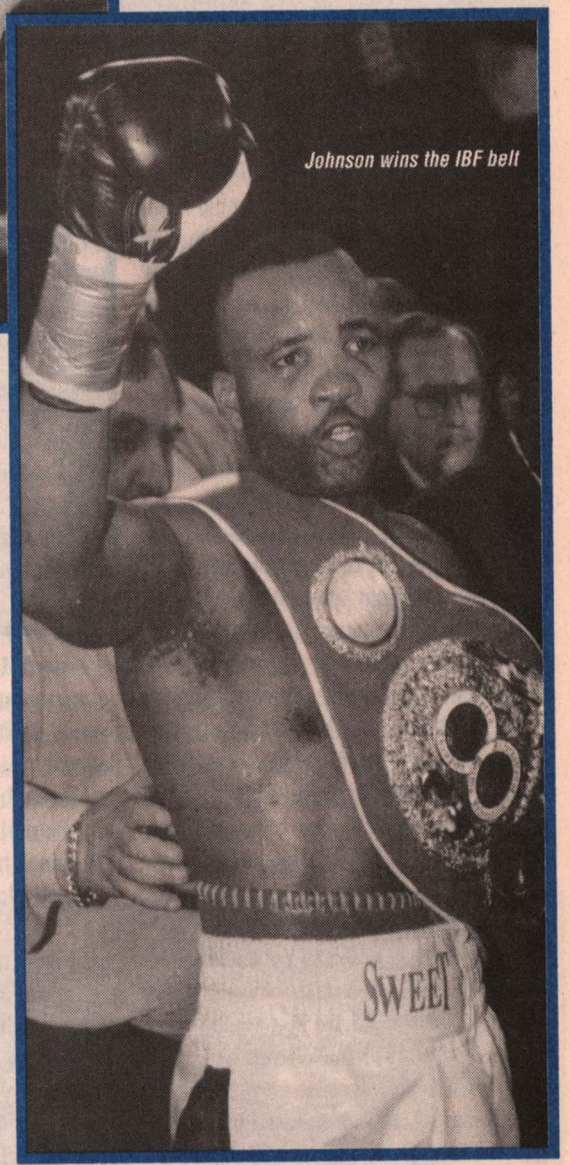
dominates Brown, but proves little against a fighter clearly on the downside of his career ... William Joppy regains the WBA 160-pound championship on the same night in Tampa, Florida, avenging his previous loss to Julio Cesar Green. Few thought Green won the first fight, and his reign ended predictably when Joppy easily outpointed him in the rematch.

February 4: Promoter Don King is held up at gunpoint and robbed of a $100,000 diamond-encrusted Rolex watch when four armed men stop the promoter's car in Mexico City. No word on whether King filed an insurance claim with Lloyd's of London.

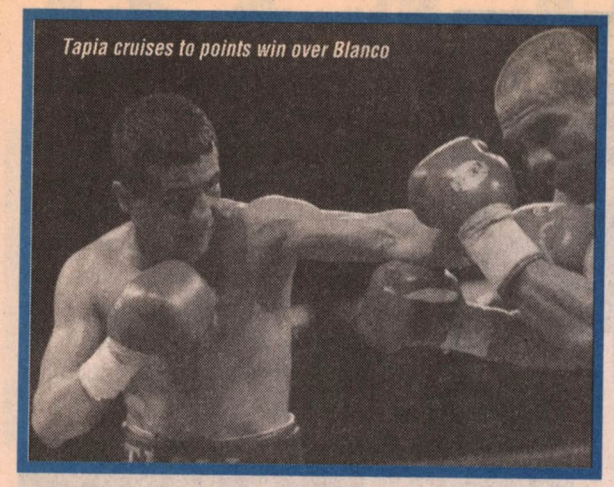

King robbed at gunpoint

February 5: Don King's luck gets even worse overnight, as he is slapped with a $100-million lawsuit in U.S. District Court by 31-year-old former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson. The fighter alleges he was systematically defrauded of tens of millions of dollars over a 10-year period by the promoter ... Middleweight Reuben Bell, 24, is shot to death by an unknown assailant in the lobby of the Washington Hospital Center's Cancer Institute, where he is being treated for colon cancer.

February 6: Reggie Johnson ends the reign of IBF light heavyweight champion William Guthrie with a fifth-round knockout in Uncasville, Connecticut. Southpaw Johnson proves too slick for the power-punching Guthrie, exposing his defensive lapses and ending the fight in spectacular fashion with a booming right hook ... On the same card, Shane Mosley stops durable Demetrio Ceballos to retain the IBF lightweight championship. Sugar Shane completely outclasses the game Ceballos with his speed and skill before closing the show, dropping the challenger in the fourth and battering him before ending the fight with an overhand right.


Johnson wins the IBF belt

February 8: Enrique Sanchez wins the vacant WBA junior featherweight championship with a 12-round unanimous decision over Rafael Del Valle in Lake Charles, Louisiana, in a dull affair.


Tapia cruises to points win over Blanco

February 13: Johnny Tapia returns home to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to defend the IBF junior bantamweight championship with a 12-round decision over Rodolfo Blanco. Tapia shines, but the level of competition proves little ... On the undercard, Frenchman Laurent Boudouani holds on to the WBA junior middleweight championship with a controversial draw against Panama's Guillermo Jones. A rematch is ordered after Jones seems to completely control the action, proving Las Vegas isn't the only place you can find questionable scoring.

February 21: Juan Carlos Gomez, a Cuban fighting out of Germany, wins the WBC cruiserweight title with a decision over Marcelo Dominguez. Despite fighting at home in Mar Del Plata, Argentina, crude Dominguez is no match for the superior skills of Gomez ... On the same card, powerpunching Nana Konadu successfully defends the WBA bantamweight title by starching Abraham Torres in two rounds ... In Paris, Khalid Rahilou retains the WBA junior welterweight championship with a decision over countryman Jean-Baptiste Mendy. Unlike fellow Frenchman Laurent Boudouani, Rahilou doesn't need any help from the judges; he does, however, have to bounce back from an early knockdown to prevail.

February 22: Mark Johnson blasts out Arthur Johnson to retain the IBF flyweight title with a first-round knockout. "Too Sharp" makes easy work of what most figured to be a difficult test with a ferocious assault.

February 27: Chatchai Dutchboy Gym holds off Korean challenger Yong Jin Kim to retain the WBC flyweight title with a decision in Suwat Thani, Thailand. Chatchai's aggressive attack is too much for Kim to overcome.

February 28: Steve Johnston retains the WBC lightweight crown with a 12-round decision over George Scott in Atlantic City. Sweden's Scott has no answers for Johnston's superior jab and quick hands in a battle of left-handers.

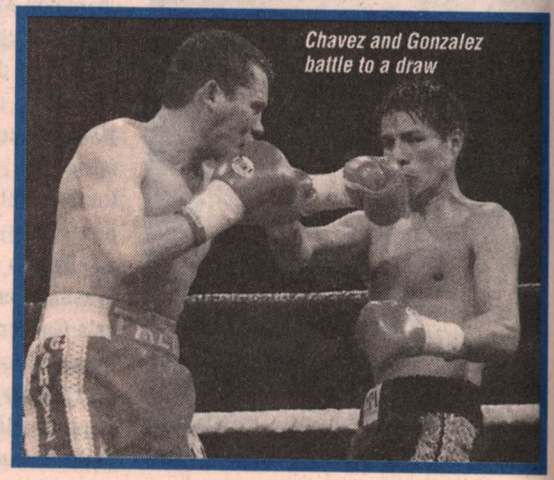
Johnston fires a right at Scott

March 1: Pichitnoi C. Siriwat beats countryman Hadao C.P. Gym over 12 rounds in Bangkok to retain the WBA junior flyweight title.

March 3: Six-time former world champion Pernell "Sweet Pea" Whitaker, 34, announces he has entered a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center. This follows a failed drug test after protesting a positive result for cocaine in his postfight test after beating Andrei Pestriaev in October '97.

March 7: Julio Cesar Chavez and Miguel Angel Gonzalez fight to a 12-round draw in Mexico City for the vacant WBC super lightweight title. Chavez gets the benefit of the doubt from the judges, winning several rounds against his younger countryman with late rallies ... On the same card, Ricardo Lopez and Rosendo Alvarez fight to a seventh-round technical draw in a unification battle for the WBA and WBC 105-pound championships. Alvarez shocks fans by dropping universally recognized strawweight king Lopez, but the real fight is among WBA and WBC officials over scorecards that disappear while there is still some dispute over the final tally.

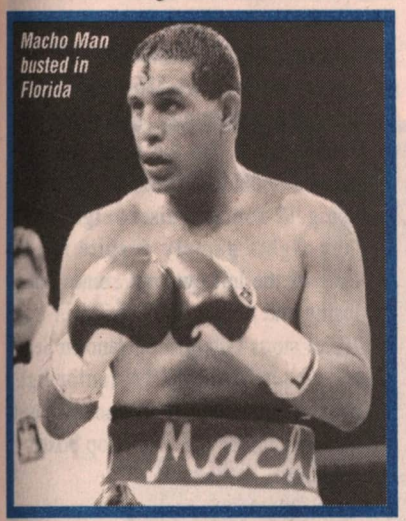
March 8: Saman Sorjaturong blasts out Shiro Yahiro in the fourth round in Yokohama, Japan, to continue his reign as WBC light flyweight champion. The hard-hitting southpaw from Thailand again proves himself one of the most dominant fighters in the lower weight classes with a strong showing on the road ... On the same card, popular Joichiro Tatsuyoshi gives Japanese fans something to cheer about with a 12-round decision over Mexico's Jose Rafael Sosa to retain the WBC bantamweight title.


Chavez and Gonzalez battle to a draw

March 10: Sherry Cole and Chevelle Butts sue Mike Tyson for $22.5-million, claiming that he verbally and physically abused them March 1 at a Washington, D.C., restaurant.

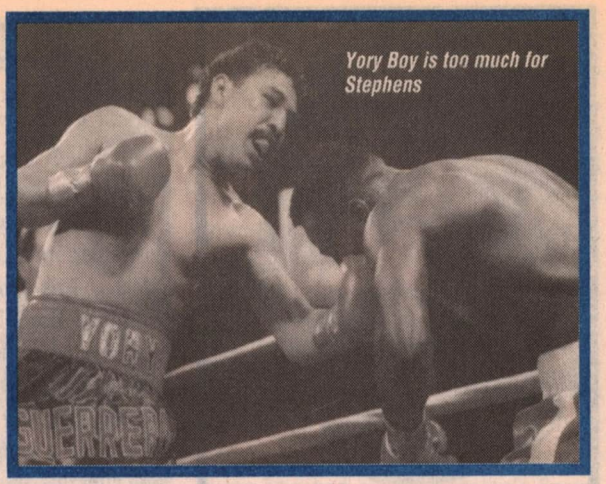
March 13: Roberto Garcia outpoints veteran Harold Warren in Miami to win the vacant IBF junior lightweight championship. California's "Grandpa" Garcia marks himself as a youngster to watch with a surprisingly dominant showing against proven world-class commodity Warren.

March 14: Two-division former champion Hector Camacho, 35, is arrested for drunken driving in Orange County, Florida. And people wonder why rising prospect Hector Jr. says he's sometimes embarrassed by his father's antics ... In Atlantic City, "Cool" Vince Phillips needs little time to feel out challenger Alfonso Sanchez, who falls in the first round. Phillips' vaunted power shows quickly as he defends the IBF junior welterweight title ... On the same card, Keith Mullings carves up Italy's David Ciarlante for a fifth-round stoppage to retain the WBC super welterweight championship. For a guy who lost three fights in a row before winning the title, underrated Mullings has the look of a rising star.


Macho Man busted in Florida

March 17: Former heavyweight contender Mitch "Blood" Green, 41, is jailed in New York City and charged with violating a protection order filed against him by a 40-year-old woman. It's too bad Green can't file a protection order against himself.

March 21: Graciano Rocchigiani wins the WBC "interim" light heavyweight title with a controversial 12-round decision over Michael Nunn in Berlin, Germany. Mandatory challenger Nunn blows the chance given to him by the WBC after true champion Roy Jones refuses to face him under the purse split dictated by the sanctioning body ... In another corner of the globe, Zolani Petelo defends the IBF mini-flyweight belt for the first time with a 12-round decision over Faisol Akbar. Sometimes it's no wonder the lighter weights don't get more exposure, with the talent pool spread so thin.


Yory Boy is too much for Stephens

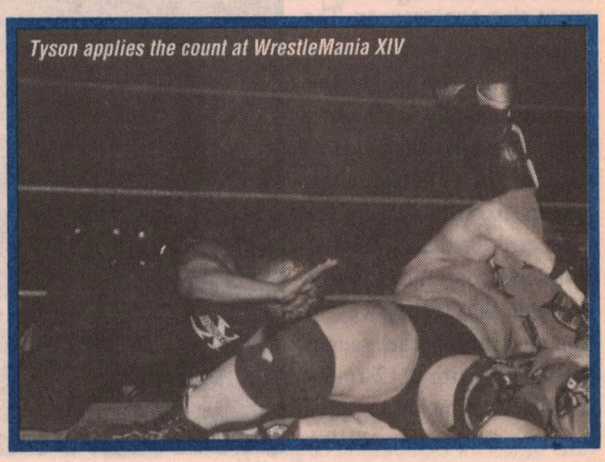
March 23: Yory Boy Campas defends the IBF junior middleweight title with a third-round knockout of mandatory challenger Anthony Stephens in Ledyard, Connecticut, in a card nationally televised by the Fox Network. Stephens claims a shoulder injury, but Campas' patented body attack does the real damage.

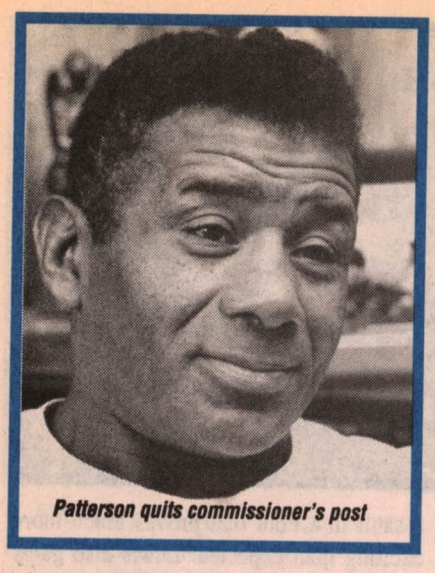
March 25: James Holyfield, older brother of WBA and IBF heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield, is convicted of rape and child molestation charges in Fulton County, Georgia, Superior Court.

March 27: Richie Woodhall wins a 12-round decision over South African Thulane Malinga in Telford, England, to capture the WBC super middleweight title. Malinga, a defensive master who gave fits to Brits Nigel Benn and Chris Eubank, can't match Woodhall's boundless energy.

March 28: Lennox Lewis overcomes a shaky start to knock out Shannon Briggs in the fifth round to retain the WBC heavyweight title in Atlantic City. Briggs rocks Lewis in the first round, but can't hold up against the champion's assault in a bout that proves much more exciting than expected. Lewis also gains the "linear" heavyweight crown in the process ... On the undercard, Charles Brewer defends the IBF super middleweight belt with a come-from-behind, 10th-round stoppage of England's Herol Graham ... Across the pond, impressive Tim Austin makes his first defense of the IBF bantamweight title with a second-round knockout of Paul Lloyd in Hull, England. The exciting Cincinnati product is one of the sport's best-kept secrets, and title defenses against no-hopers like Lloyd don't do him any justice ... On the same card, Imamu Mayfield retains the IBF cruiserweight championship with a difficult defense against Terry Dunstan, who gives Mayfield all he wants before losing by stoppage in the 11th round.

March 29: Mike Tyson finally cashes a paycheck after appearing as a "special enforcer" at WrestleMania XIV in Boston, Massachusetts. Where's Peter McNeeley when you need him?


Tyson applies the count at WrestleMania XIV



Patterson quits commissioner's post

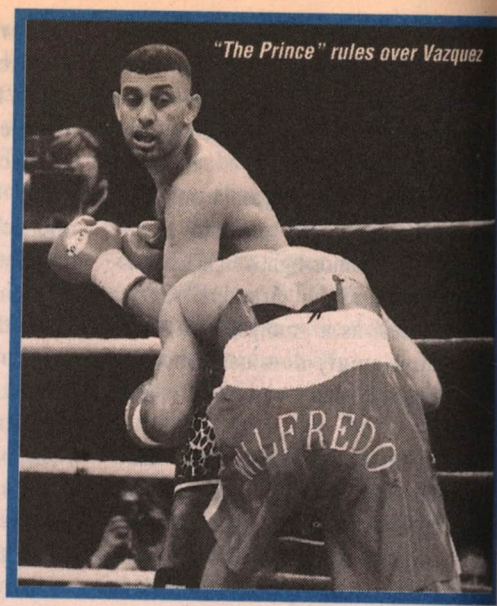
March 30: Jane Couch strikes a blow for women's lib in England, winning a sex discrimination suit against the British Board Boxing of Control in a London court after the national governing body of the sport had previously prohibited her from boxing professionally in her homeland.

April 1: Two-time former world heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson abruptly resigns as New York State Athletic Commissioner at age 63. Patterson suffers from severe memory loss attributed to his distinguished boxing career.

April 3: Felix Trinidad headlines a Don King card in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, scoring a fourth-round knockout of Mahenge Zulu to retain the WBA welterweight crown in one of his increasingly infrequent ring appearances. The Trinidad camp's criticism of Oscar De La Hoya's level of opposition hardly holds water while he wastes time against the likes of unknown challengers like Zulu ... On the same card, Fred "L'il Hagler" Norwood continues his tear through the featherweight ranks, winning the vacant WBA title with a 12-round decision over highly regarded Antonio Cermeno ... WBA super middleweight titlist Frankie Liles continues his winning ways as he rounds out the triple-title bill in Puerto Rico with a 12-round decision over Russian Andrei Schkalikov, but draws boos from the crowd for his lackluster performance ... In Tijuana, Mexico, Erik Morales knocks out Remigio Daniel Molina in the sixth round to defend the WBC super bantamweight championship. Exciting Morales seems primed for a jump up in competition after this one-sided outing.

April 6: Former heavyweight contender Jimmy Bivins, 78, is hospitalized in Cleveland, Ohio, after police, responding to a neglected child complaint in a residential neighborhood, discover him wasting away in a dark, filthy attic.

April 9: Former WBA heavyweight champion John Tate, 43, dies of a stroke caused by a brain tumor in Knoxville, Tennessee. The 1976 Olympic bronze medalist, who outpointed Gerrie Coetzee in October '79 to win the title, lost it five months later when he blew a big points lead in a 15th-round knockout loss to Mike Weaver. Tate, beset by drug problems after his retirement in 1988, compiled a 34-3 (23) record.

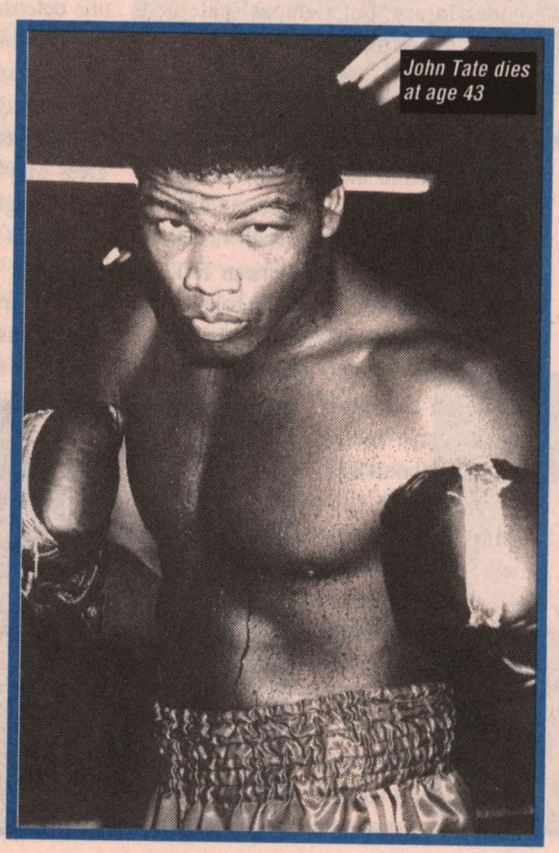


"The Prince" rules over Vazquez

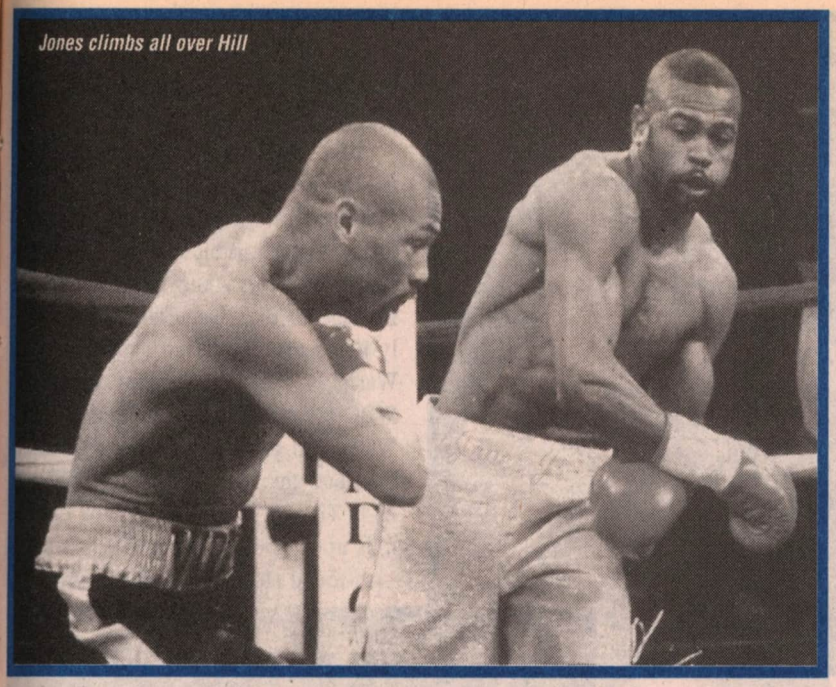
April 16: Two-division former champion Meldrick Taylor is banned from boxing in New Jersey by commissioner Larry Hazzard. "I believe Meldrick's skills have eroded to a point where he should not be permitted to fight," Hazzard says.

April 18: Naseem Hamed returns to England and has an easy time with three-time WBA champ Wilfredo Vasquez in a featherweight bout. Hamed stops Vasquez, who gave up the WBA 126-pound belt for the lucrative opportunity, in seven rounds in Manchester ... On the same card, Carl Thompson decisions Chris Eubank in an inspiring 12-round cruiserweight battle. Eubank fights gamely despite terrible swelling of the left eye, but comes out on the losing end of a close decision ... Yong Soo Choi stops Gilberto Serrano in Seoul, Korea, to retain the WBA junior lightweight championship. Little known outside the Orient, Choi is one of the top boxers in the Far East.

April 24: After marking himself as a fighter to watch in the 126-pound ranks, Hector Lizarraga's long winning streak ends with a surprising 12-round decision loss to Mexican Manuel Medina. Well-traveled veteran Medina, who seemed past his title-winning days, schools Lizarraga to take the IBF featherweight championship.



John Tate dies at age 43


Jones climbs all over Hill

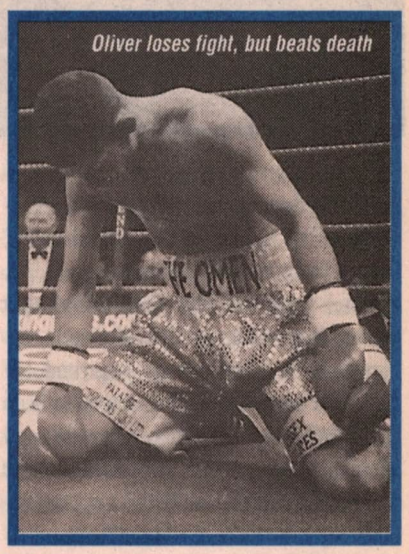
April 25: Roy Jones brings a sudden end to his over-the-weight match with former light heavyweight king Virgil Hill, landing a right to the ribcage that stops Hill cold in the fourth round in Biloxi, Mississippi ... Gerry Penalosa keeps the WBC super flyweight title after a cut caused by an accidental headbutt abruptly ends his defense against Joel Luna Zarate in the second round in Manila, Philippines. The fight is ruled a technical draw.

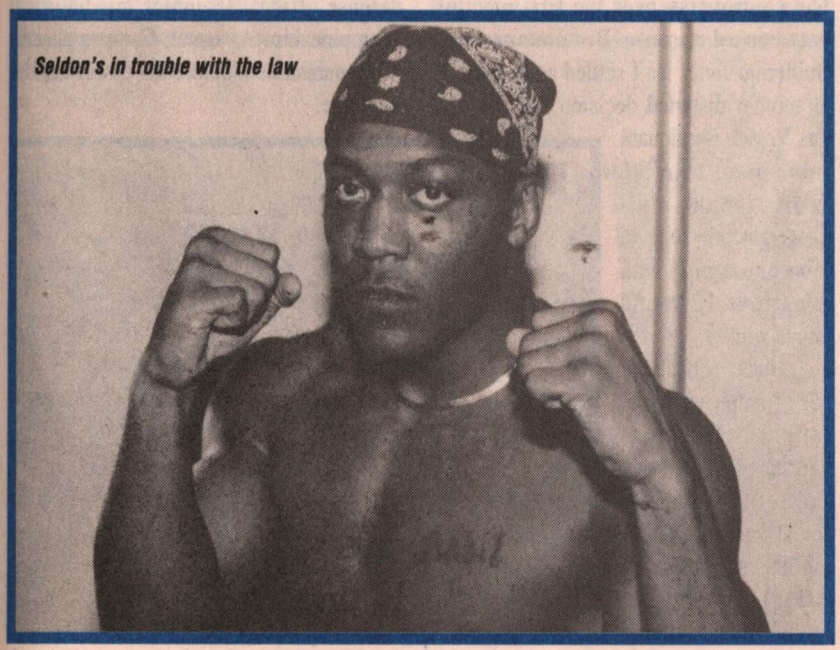
April 29: Satoshi Iida outpoints countryman Hiroki Ioka over 12 rounds in Nagoya, Japan, to successfully defend the WBA junior bantamweight championship.

April 30: Mauricio Pastrana's stock continues to rise as he scores a fourth-round knockout of Anis Roga to defend the IBF junior flyweight title in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

May 1: Chatchai Dutchboy Gym makes his second defense of the WBC flyweight championship with a fifth-round knockout of Korean Young Soon Chang in Kanchanaburi, Thailand.

May 2: Hassine Cherifi adds to France's growing roster of world champions with an upset of Keith Holmes for the WBC middleweight title in Villeurbanne, France. Holmes' dreams of unification matches with William Joppy and Bernard Hopkins go up in smoke as he drops a 12-round decision ... On the same card, steady Fabrice Tiozzo barely works up a sweat in bombing out Terry Ray in one round in defense of the WBA cruiserweight championship ... In London, British super bantamweight champion Spencer Oliver, 24, undergoes surgery to remove a blood clot from his brain after being knocked out by Ukraine's Sergei Devakov in the 10th round.

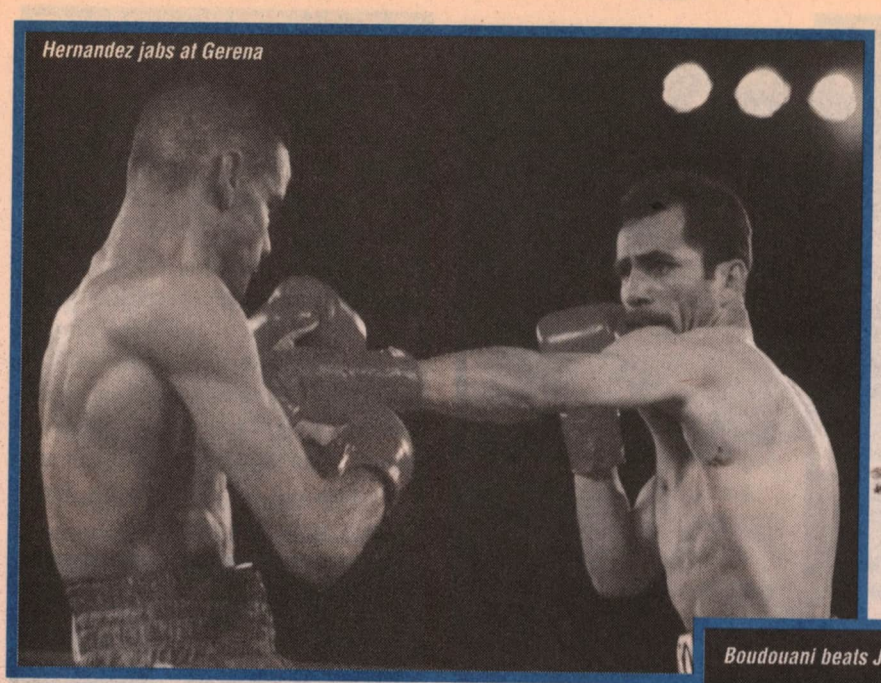

Oliver loses fight, but beats death


Seldon's in trouble with the law

May 7: Former WBA heavyweight champion Bruce Seldon, 31, pleads guilty to two counts of endangering the welfare of a child and admits to giving marijuana to and having sex with a 15-year-old girl.

May 9: Shane Mosley's impressive reign as IBF lightweight champion continues with an eight-round knockout of John-John Molina in Atlantic City. The Californian methodically breaks down Molina with a body attack and makes easy work of a proven challenger.

May 16: Jean-Baptiste Mendy rebounds from his loss to Khalid Rahilou with a surprising upset of Orzubek "Gussy" Nazarov in Paris to win the WBA lightweight title via 12-round decision. The Japan-based Russian's long reign comes to an end as his infrequent activity finally catches up with him ... Vuyani Bungu outpoints Colombia's Ernesto Gray


Hernandez jabs at Gerena

in Bophutatswana, South Africa, to successfully defend the IBF junior featherweight title. Most at ringside consider Bungu lucky to have gotten the nod ... A doubleheader in Indio, California, sees Genaro Hernandez and Erik Morales notch victories. Hernandez wins a spirited 12-round decision over Carlos Gerena to keep the WBC super featherweight title, and Morales blasts out Jose Luis Bueno in two rounds to retain the WBC super bantamweight crown in his third defense.

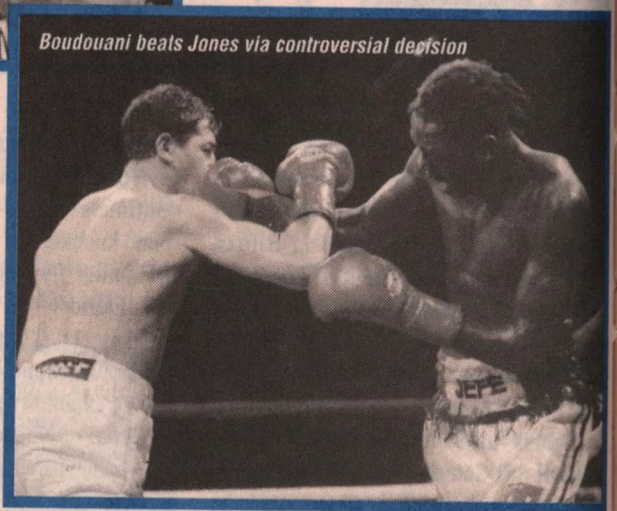
May 21: Former junior middleweight contender Tony Ayala Jr. is turned down in his bid to be paroled by the New Jersey State Parole Board. The 35-year-old former prodigy is scheduled for unconditional release in June 1999, after being incarcerated in 1983 following a conviction for aggravated sexual assault.

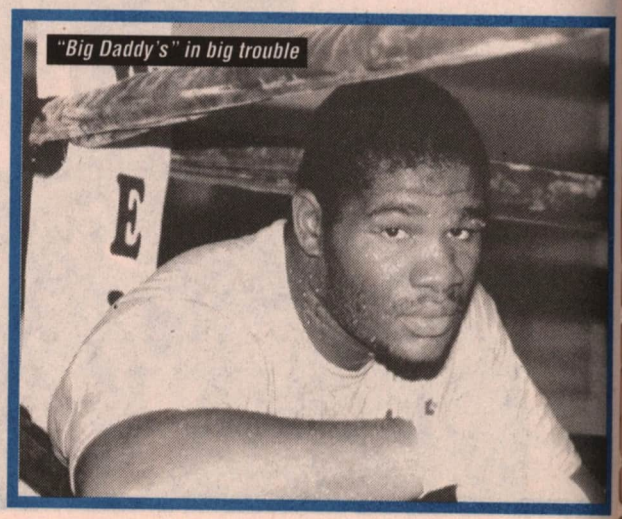
May 29: Argentina's Hugo Soto wins the WBA flyweight championship with a 12-round decision over Jose Bonilla in Las Vegas. The swarming Soto's strength is the difference as he ekes out a close verdict over the Mexican champion ... In Pesaro, Italy, Reggie Johnson turns back challenger Ole Klemetsen over 12 rounds to defend the IBF 175-pound championship. The former middleweight champion again proves his mettle among the light heavyweights.

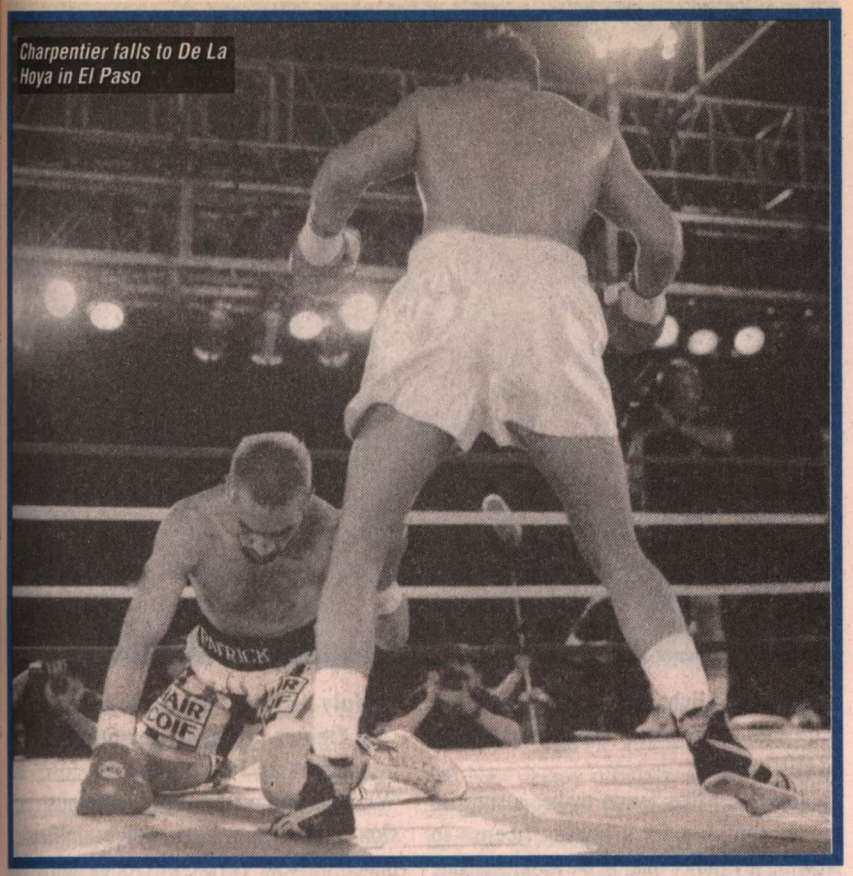
May 30: Tim Austin's preference for cameo appearances continues as he makes short work of Andrian Kaspari with a third-round knockout in Las Vegas. The challenger can't avoid Austin's power shots in his bid for the IBF bantamweight championship, with a classic southpaw one-two bringing the finish ... The controversy over the first meeting between Laurent Boudouani and Guillermo Jones isn't settled as they battle to another disputed decision, this time in Las Vegas. Boudouani survives to take the WBA junior middleweight title back to France, escaping with a narrow 12-round points win.

June 2: A bad year for former heavyweight champions continues as Riddick Bowe, 30, is indicted for allegedly abducting his estranged wife and their five children from their home in suburban Charlotte, North Carolina, and driving them to Virginia in February. If convicted, Bowe faces up to 10 years in prison and a $250,000 fine.

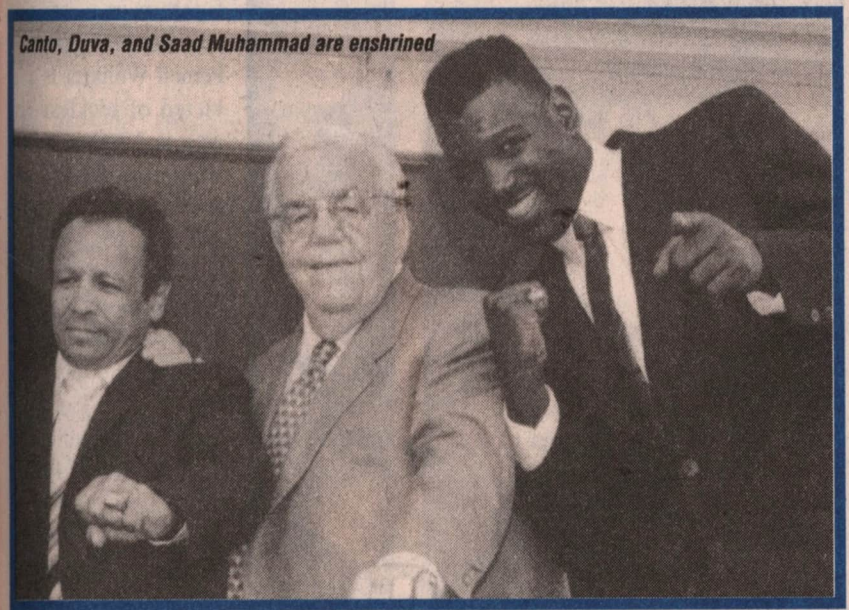
June 5: Evander Holyfield's scheduled defense of the WBA heavyweight title, planned for the next day at Madison Square Garden, is abruptly canceled when challenger Henry Akinwande tests positive for hepatitis B ... Juan Carlos Gomez easily holds off Australian challenger Guy Waters in Hamburg, Germany, to keep the WBC cruiserweight championship. That Waters can garner a title shot only underlines how thin the cruiserweight ranks are ... In Tijuana, Mexico, Yory Boy Campas rolls up another knockout victory with an 11th-round stoppage of Pedro Ortega in defense of the IBF junior middleweight championship. As usual, Campas absorbs some punishment before his power decides the issue.

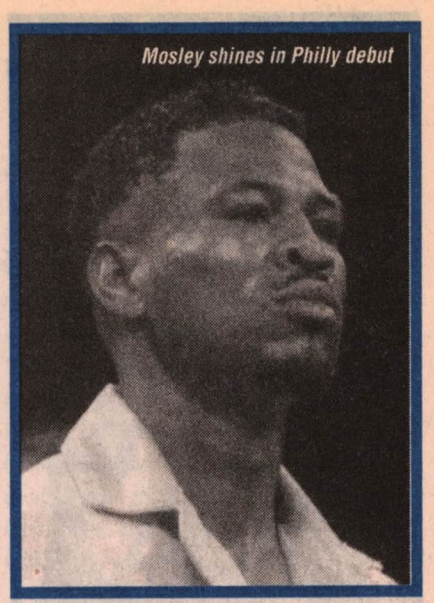

Boudouani beats Jones via controversial decision


"Big Daddy's" in big trouble


Charpentier falls to De La Hoya in El Paso

June 13: More than 45,000 enthusiastic fans converge on the Sun Bowl in El Paso, Texas, to turn Oscar De La Hoya's mandatory defense against Patrick Charpentier into an event. That the Frenchman doesn't belong in the ring with De La Hoya hardly matters as the crowd is thrilled by his third-round knockout in defense of the WBC welterweight title … On the undercard, Mexico's rangy Cesar Bazan scores an eye-opening upset of Denver's Stevie Johnston to take the WBC lightweight championship. Bazan outworks Johnston over 12 grueling rounds of trench warfare to end Johnston's reign … In Atlantic City, Fred Norwood knocks out Nicaragua's Genaro Rios in the eighth round


Canto, Duva, and Saad Muhammad are enshrined


Mosley shines in Philly debut

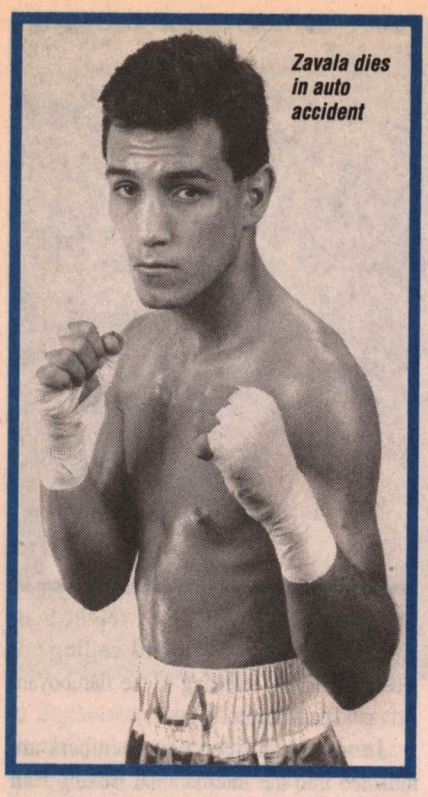
to retain the WBA featherweight belt. Afterward, Norwood begins calling out Naseem Hamed, referring to the flamboyant Brit as "The Princess."

June 14: Thirteen new members are inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York: Matthew Saad Muhammad, Miguel Canto, Antonio Cervantes, and Sammy Angott in the Modern category; Old-Timers Joe Choynski, Frankie Genaro, George "Kid" Lavigne, Benny Lynch, and Sammy Mandell; Pioneer Prof. Mike Donovan; and Non-participants Lou Duva, Herman Taylor, and William A. Brady.

June 18: Heavyweight Andrew Golota files a $21-million malpractice suit against orthopedic surgeon Scott Katzman, charging that the doctor used deficient judgment and execution in injecting the fighter with lidocaine an hour before his October 1997 challenge of Lennox Lewis for the WBC title. The suit alleges that Dr. Katzman missed Golota's knee muscle and hit an artery by mistake.

June 25: The comeback bid of former heavyweight champion James "Buster" Douglas ends when he falls in one round to fringe contender Lou Savarese in Mashantucket, Connecticut.

June 27: Shane Mosley deserves an easy outing after his brilliant performance against John-John Molina, and Wilfrido Ruiz proves accommodating. Mosley stops Ruiz in five rounds in Philadelphia to keep the IBF lightweight championship.


Zavala dies in auto accident

Del Valle gives Jones a tough time

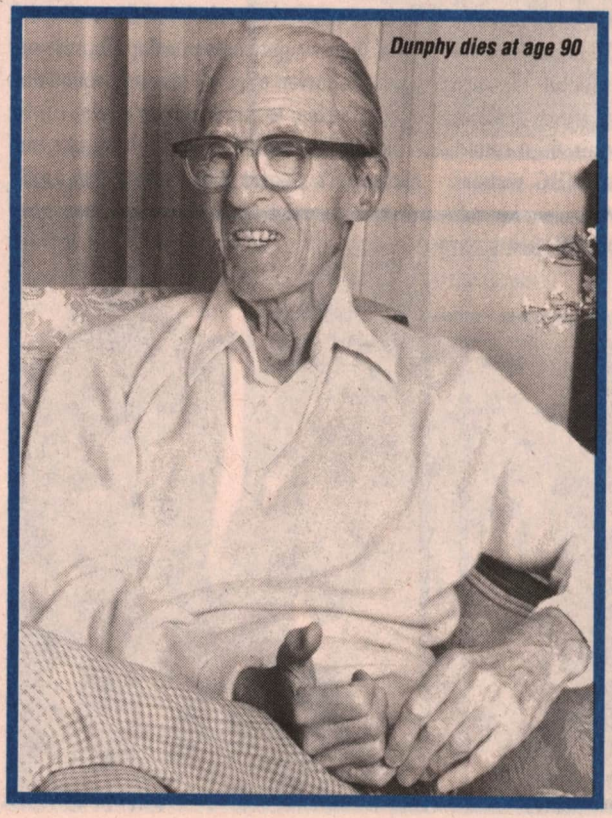
July 4: Zolani Petelo retains the IBF mini flyweight championship with a seventh-round knockout of Carmelo Caceres in Hammanskraal, South Africa, to continue to his reign in the 105-pound ranks ... Featherweight Rudy Zavala, 29, is killed in an auto accident in Rosemead, California. Zavala, who had a 25-8-2 (21) record, had not fought since losing to Tracy Patterson in September 1997.

July 9: A federal grand jury acquits Don King of all charges at his second insurance fraud trial. The promoter is now able to turn his attention back to rebuilding his stable, which has suffered during his long battle with federal prosecutors.

July 10: Ever-active Fred Norwood outpoints Luis Mendoza over 12 rounds in Miami, Florida, to keep the WBA featherweight championship. Norwood's take-all-comers attitude continues to impress, as does his workmanship in the ring.

July 16: The Second U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reinstates a $4-million award owed to trainer Kevin Rooney by Mike Tyson for unjustly firing him ... Former heavyweight contender Tommy Morrison, 30, is arrested in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, on suspicion of drunken driving, destruction of private property, and running a red light. The woes continue for Morrison, whose career ended after he tested HIV positive.

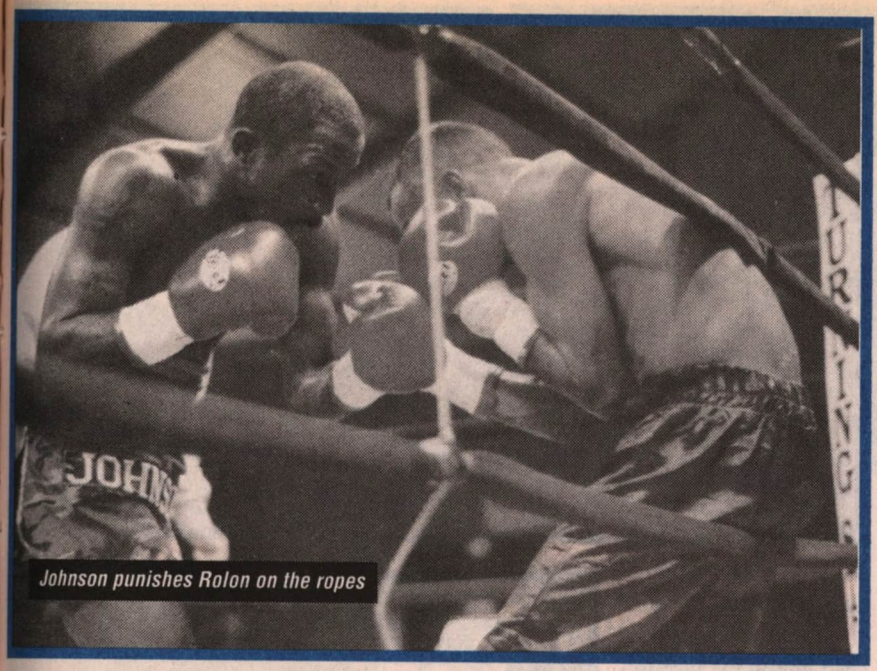
July 17: Mike Tyson makes a surprise move, applying for a boxing license in New Jersey rather than in Nevada, the state that pulled his license after he bit Evander Holyfield in their 1997 rematch.


Dunphy dies at age 90

July 18: Lou Del Valle becomes the first fighter to knock down WBC 175-pound champ Roy Jones, but loses the WBA championship by unanimous decision in their light heavyweight unification match in New York City. Jones dominates most of the way, but a left by southpaw Del Valle fells Jones and adds drama to the contest.

July 23: The "Voice Of Boxing," 90-year-old Don Dunphy, dies of heart failure. Dunphy covered more than 2,000 fights in a career that spanned 50 years ... Pernell Whitaker is convicted of reckless driving in Virginia Beach, Virginia. He is sentenced to 90 days in jail and fined $500.

July 26: Heavyweight Cody "The Alaskan Assassin" Koch, 25, is found dead outside a bar in Saginaw, Michigan. According to Sheriff's Capt. Robert Rae, Koch had been involved in a dispute outside the bar, but no arrests are made ...


Johnson punishes Rolon on the ropes

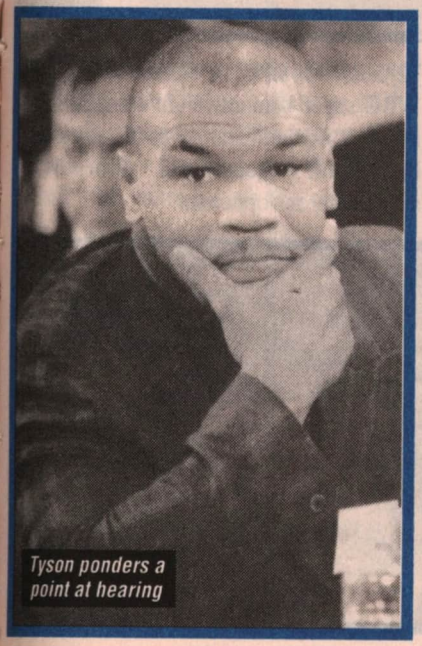
Mark Johnson has to go the distance, but retains the IBF flyweight title with a 12-round win over Luis Rolon in Verona, New York. Johnson again proves himself the dominant 112-pounder in the world, but receives criticism for showboating over the last half of the bout ... In Nagoya, Japan, Satoshi Iida keeps the WBA junior bantamweight title with a 12-round decision over challenger Joma Gamboa.

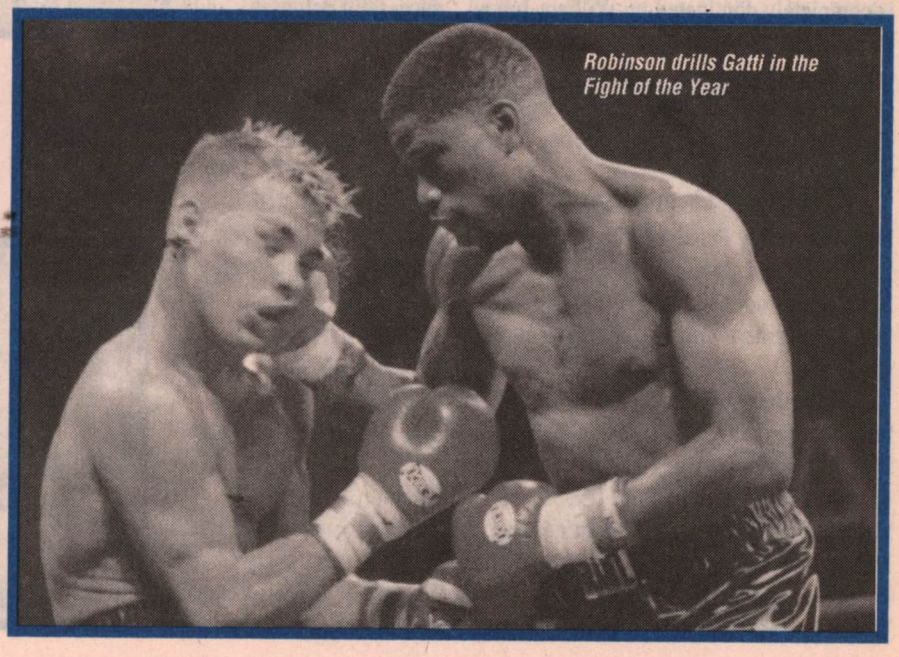
August 13: Mike Tyson withdraws his application for a boxing license the day before the New Jersey Athletic Control Board is scheduled to rule on his request. The move follows criticism from Nevada and New Jersey officials, as well as U.S. Senator John McCain, for trying to circumvent the state that pulled his license.

August 15: Filipino Luisito Espinosa retains the WBC featherweight title with an 11th-round technical decision over unheralded challenger Juan Carlos Ramirez in El Paso, Texas. Espinosa struggles with the Mexican contender, but keeps himself in the Naseem Hamed sweepstakes with the victory.

August 22: In what will be named THE RING's Fight of the Year, Ivan Robinson and Arturo Gatti go toe-to-toe in a captivating 10-round lightweight bout in Atlantic City. Robinson, who had been written off following a kayo defeat the previous year, outboxes the favored Gatti, survives a knockdown and two near knockouts, and is rewarded with a split-decision win over the always exciting former 130-pound champ ... Charles Brewer ventures to Leipzig, Germany, to stop mandatory challenger Antoine Byrd in three rounds in defense of the IBF super middleweight crown. Brewer signs a promotional agreement that obligates him to return to Germany to defend against little-known Sven Ottke, who wins on the undercard.

August 23: Joichiro Tatsuyoshi holds off mandatory challenger Paulie Ayala in Yokohama, Japan, by sixth-round technical decision to retain the WBC bantamweight title. Tatsuyoshi is ahead on the scorecards when a cut caused by an accidental butt halts the action ... On the same card, Cesar Bazan defends the WBC lightweight championship with a 12-round decision over Hiroyuki Sakamoto ... The triple bill is rounded out by Wandee Chor Chareon's 12-round majority decision win over top-ranked Rocky Lin for the WBC "interim" strawweight title. The winner is expected to take over when Ricardo Lopez moves up in weight, but Lopez insists on a rematch with Rosendo Alvarez first.


Tyson ponders a point at hearing


Robinson drills Gatti in the Fight of the Year

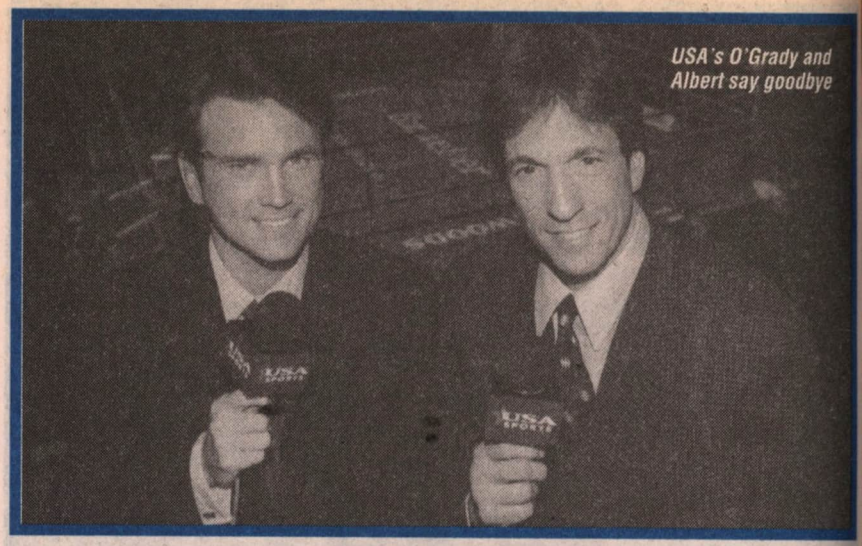
August 25: A sad day for boxing on two fronts: The USA Network ends a 17-year run of its popular *Tuesday Night Fights* program with a card that features highlights as well as live action from Philadelphia's legendary Blue Horizon. Butterbean knocks out Tim Pollard in the first round of a heavyweight bout in the final fight of the series ... In Coatesville, Pennsylvania, two-time lightweight champion Bob Montgomery dies at age 79 in Veterans Hospital, where he was recovering from a recent stroke. Montgomery, 75-19-3 (37), won the title from Beau Jack in 1943, only to lose it back later that year. He beat Jack again in 1944, and held the crown until passing it on to Ike Williams three years later. Montgomery retired in 1950 and was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1995.

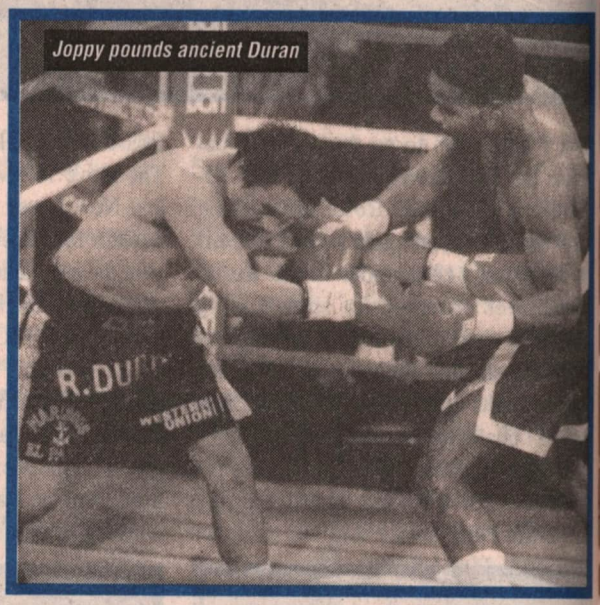
August 28: Bernard Hopkins keeps the IBF middleweight championship after a bizarre finish in Las Vegas. His bout with mandatory challenger Robert Allen is halted in the fourth when Hopkins is rendered unable to continue after suffering an ankle injury falling out of the ring. Referee Mills Lane caused the mishap when he accidentally pushed Hopkins while trying to separate the fighters from a clinch. A rematch of the wild, foul-filled affair is ordered as soon as Hopkins is fit to return to the ring ... On the undercard, Roberto Duran ends a Hall of Fame career on a down note as he is completely dominated by William Joppy in a bid for the WBA 160-pound championship. Joppy's fast hands are too much for the old warrior, who cannot avoid the champ's onslaught. A flurry by Joppy ends matters in the third.

August 29: In Joo Cho finds the formula to beat Gerry Penalosa, running his way to a 12-round decision in Seoul, South Korea. Cho does his best to avoid a fight and is rewarded with an unpopular points verdict.

September 2: Following an August 31 auto accident in Gaithersville, Maryland, Richard Hardick, 50, files second-degree assault charges against Mike Tyson, alleging that the former heavyweight champion kicked him in the groin after the three-car chain-reaction mishap.

September 3: Abmielec Saucedo, 62, files assault charges against Mike Tyson, alleging that Tyson punched him in the face following the same auto accident.


USA's O'Grady and Albert say goodbye

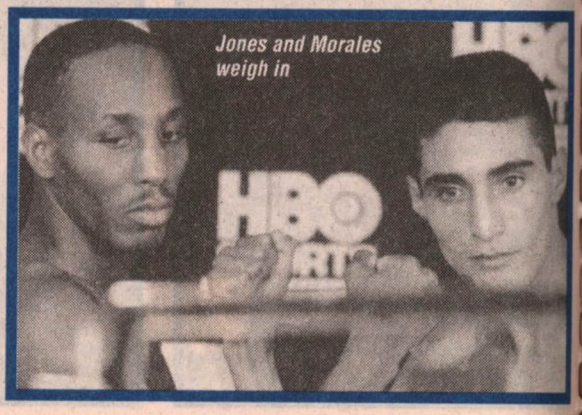

Joppy pounds ancient Duran

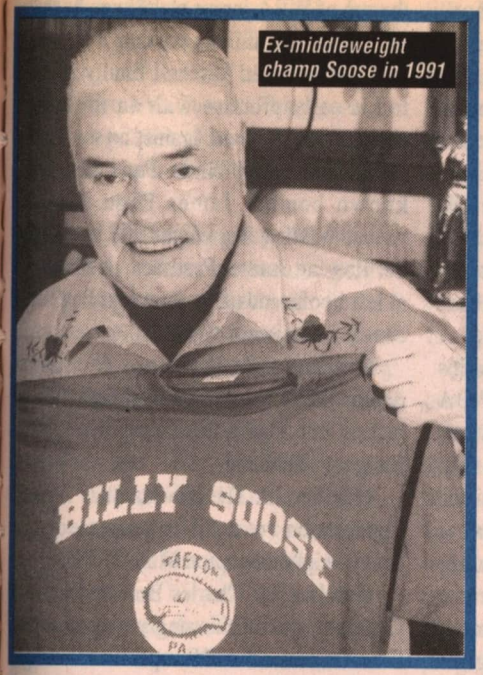
September 4: Yong Soo Choi loses the WBA junior lightweight title in Tokyo, dropping a 12-round decision to fast-rising Takanori Hatakeyama in a rematch of a previous draw. Choi falls to the unbeaten challenger by majority decision after making seven successful defenses ... In Atlantic City, Mark Johnson stops Jose Laureano in six rounds to keep the IBF flyweight title.

September 5: Richie Woodhall defends the WBC super middleweight championship with a highly disputed 12-round decision over late substitute Glenn Catley in Telford, England.

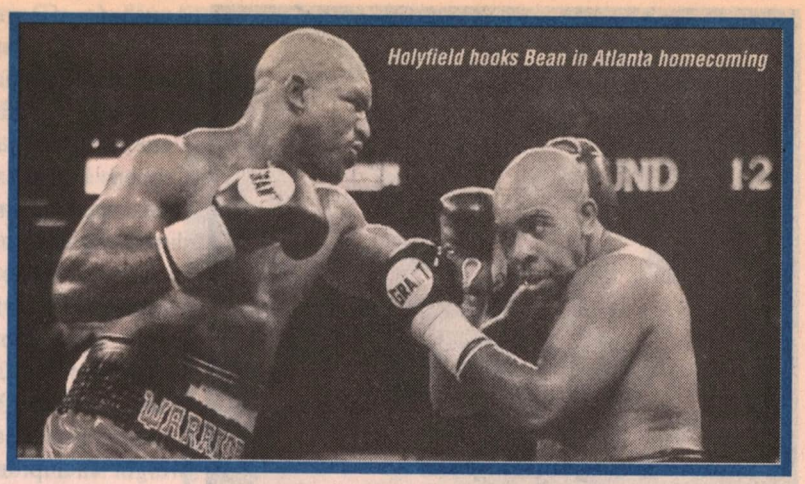
September 9: The Internal Revenue Service places a $6.3-million tax lien on Mike Tyson's 61-room mansion in Farmington, Connecticut.

September 12: Erik Morales posts a surprisingly easy fourth-round knockout of Junior Jones in Tijuana, Mexico, to extend his reign as WBC super bantamweight champion. The rising 122-pound star gives his stock a big boost with a meaningful victory over a still-dangerous opponent.


Jones and Morales weigh in



Ex-middleweight champ Soose in 1991


Holyfield hooks Bean in Atlanta homecoming

September 14: Former middleweight champion Billy Soose, 83, dies after a stroke in Honesdale, Pennsylvania. Soose, 34-6-1 (13), won the title in May 1941 with a decision over Ken Overlin and relinquished the crown six months later.

September 17: Preparing for a title defense against Vaughn Bean, WBA and IBF heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield reveals that he has fathered two illegitimate children in 1998 by two different women. He says he discussed divorce with his wife, but the couple opted for counseling.

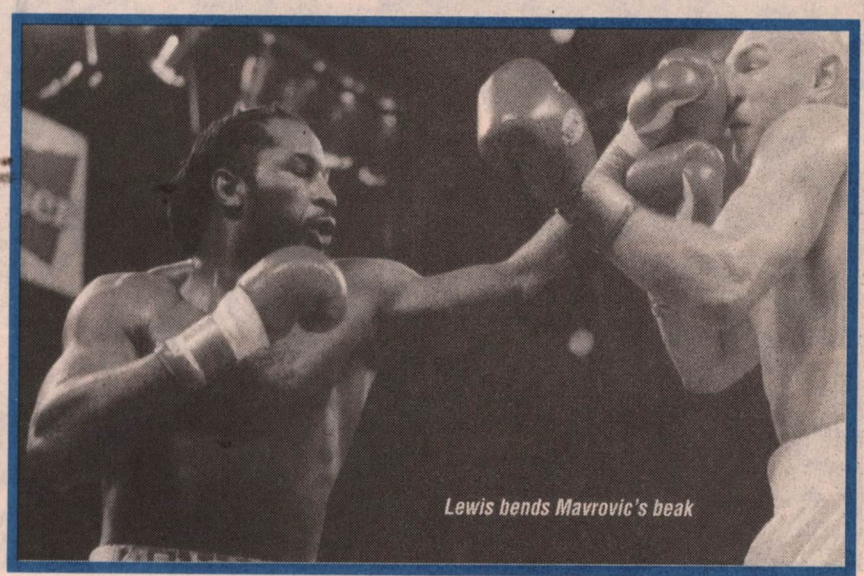
September 18: Oscar De La Hoya returns to action with a repeat victory over rival Julio Cesar Chavez in defense of the WBC welterweight title. The fight is more competitive than De La Hoya's bloody win in their first meeting, as the champion elects to slug it out until Chavez quits on his stool at the end of the eighth round ... On the same card, Yory Boy Campas overwhelms Larry Barnes in three rounds to keep the IBF junior middleweight championship.

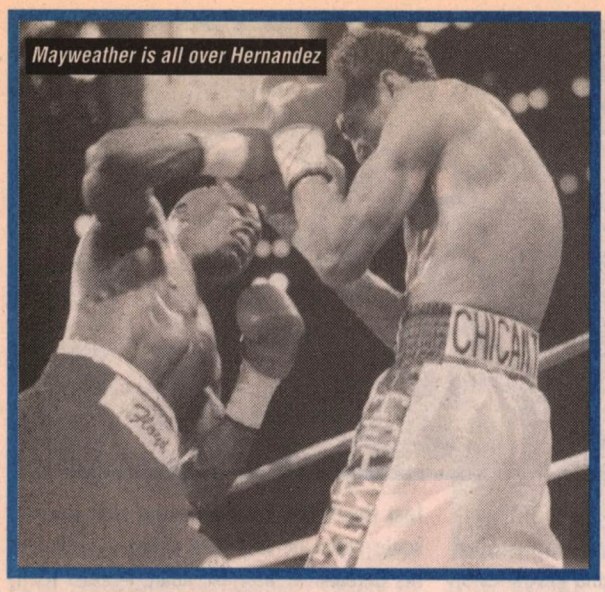
September 19: Evander Holyfield returns home to Atlanta to post an ugly 12-round decision over undeserving mandatory challenger Vaughn Bean before more than 41,000 fans at the Georgia Dome. Holyfield floors Bean late to seal the win, but shows signs of wear and tear ... On the undercard, Robert Allen claims the IBF "interim" middleweight championship with an easy first-round knockout of reluctant Abdula Ramadan, who turns his back the first time Allen opens up ... Mike Tyson spends his day in front of the Nevada commission pleading his case to have his license reinstated. The hearing is adjourned without a vote, and the commission orders Tyson to submit to psychiatric testing to show he is fit to return to the ring.

September 22: In the first boxing card televised on the cable network TNT, Shane Mosley successfully defends the IBF lightweight title by belting out mandatory challenger Eduardo Morales in the fifth round at The Theatre at Madison Square Garden ... Also on the show, Angel Manfredy wins a hard-fought 12-round decision over John Brown ... Freddie Norwood, having lost the WBA featherweight title on the scale when he failed to make weight for his defense in Tokyo, Japan, against Koji Matsumoto, still comes through with a victory. The challenger had the chance to take the vacant title if he could beat Norwood, but was completely overwhelmed by the southpaw from St. Louis, who won by 10th-round knockout.

September 24: Former heavyweight champion Joe Frazier, 54, is cleared of drunken driving charges in Philadelphia Municipal Court.

September 26: Lennox Lewis does little to capitalize on Evander Holyfield's recent showing with a less than scintillating 12-round decision over game but outgunned Zeljko Mavrovic in Uncasville, Connecticut. Lewis retains the WBC heavyweight championship, but never threatens to put the pesky Croatian away.


Lewis bends Mavrovic's beak


Mayweather is all over Hernandez

October 2: Andrew Golota returns to his home country to beat Tim Witherspoon over 10 rounds in Wroclaw, Poland. The fight also kicks off a new weekly format of boxing on the ESPN2 network.

October 3: Floyd Mayweather Jr. has a surprisingly easy time in dismantling veteran Genaro Hernandez for the WBC super featherweight title in Las Vegas. Mayweather becomes the first U.S. Olympian from the Class of 1996 to claim a world championship ... Undefeated Juan Carlos Gomez quietly keeps rolling along as WBC cruiserweight champion with a second-round knockout of Alexei Iliin in Augsburg, Germany, once again showing his superiority in a barren division ... In Caracas, Venezuela, Antonio Cermeno has an easier-than-expected time in dispatching Genaro Rios in four rounds for the vacant WBA featherweight championship ... On the same card, Carlos Barreto gains the WBA "interim" junior featherweight championship with a 12-round decision over defensive whiz Hector Acero-Sanchez ... Mauricio Pastrana completes the triple-header in Venezuela with a unanimous decision over Jose Bonilla, putting the hometown fighter down several times in the late going to seal his bid for the "interim" WBA flyweight crown.

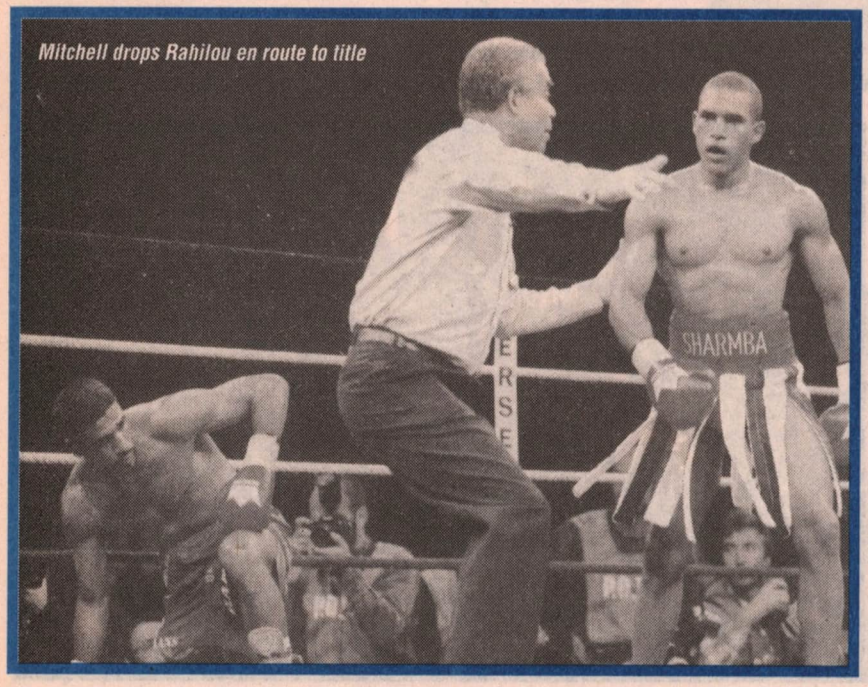
October 8: In a fight with relatively minor implications, former heavyweight contender Alex Stewart trades knockdowns with Ezra Sellers before finally winning in the third round. Stewart climbed off the canvas three times and drops Sellers a total of four times in a memorable brawl.

October 10: Sharmba Mitchell ends the run of WBA junior welterweight champion Khalid Kahilou, posting a 12-round decision in Paris. Mitchell finally lives up to his early promise with an impressive showing on the road against an underrated champion ... Also on the Paris card, little-known bomber James Page wins the vacant WBA welterweight title by blasting out Russian Andrei Pestriaev. A sensational left hook sends Pestriaev toppling to the canvas in the second round.

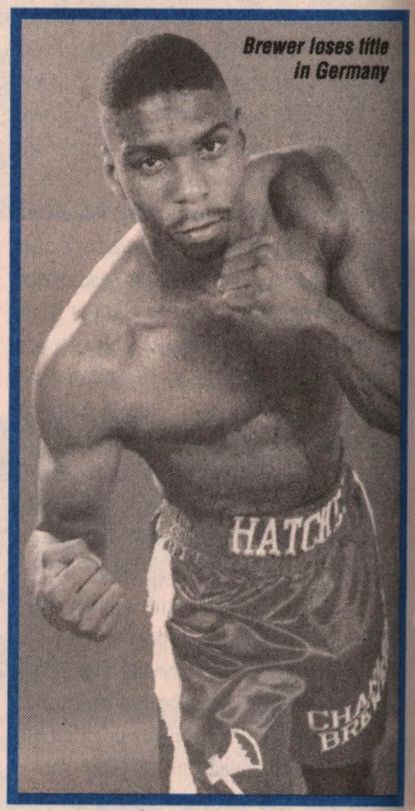
October 17: Pichitnoi C. Siriwat retains the WBA junior flyweight title by belting out Taekil Lee in eight rounds in Bangkok, Thailand.

October 19: The Nevada State Athletic Commission votes 4-1 to relicense former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson.

October 24: Charles Brewer returns to Germany, but is stunningly outpointed by Sven Ottke for the IBF super middleweight title. Brewer seems to let up over the last couple of rounds, allowing the '96 German Olympian to pull out the close decision in Dusseldorf ... In Atlantic City, IBF junior lightweight champ Roberto Garcia has to rise from a second-round knockdown to stop Cuban Ramon Ledon in the fifth round of an exciting shootout.



Mitchell drops Rahilou en route to title


Brewer loses title in Germany

October 27: Japanese super bantamweight Ken Katagiri, 28, dies from a brain injury suffered in his October 12 bout in Tokyo with Fusaaki Takengana, in which Katagiri was knocked out in the ninth round. It was the 28th ring fatality in Japan since 1952.

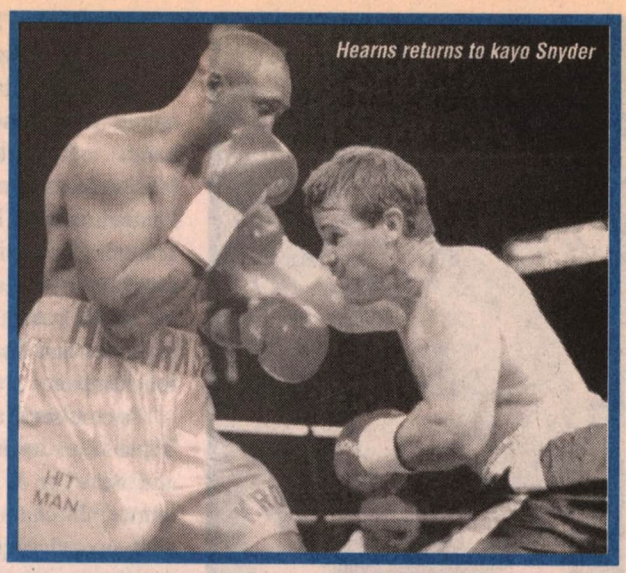
October 27: Las Vegas police officer Thomas Moyer files a lawsuit against Mike Tyson, claiming the former heavyweight champion struck him in the chest when he tried to restrain the fighter during the melee that followed Tyson's disqualification loss to Evander Holyfield.

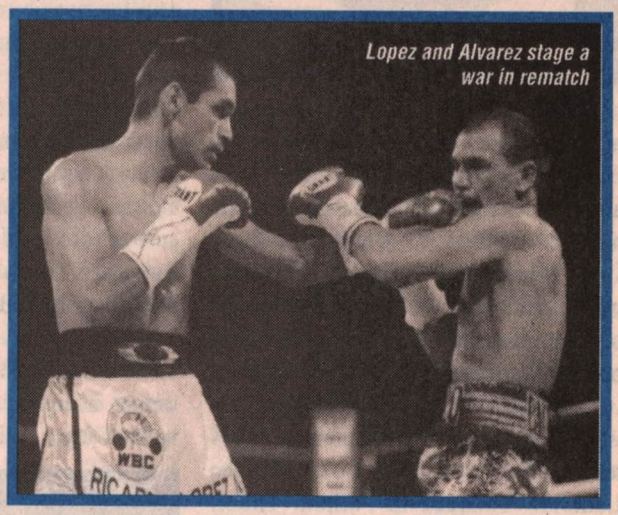
October 30: After two unsuccessful title tries in '94, "King" Arthur Williams finally becomes a champion by knocking out untested titleholder Imamu Mayfield in nine rounds in Biloxi, Mississippi. Williams captures the IBF cruiserweight belt ... Cesar Bazan makes his second successful defense of the WBC lightweight championship with a tougher-than-expected majority decision over countryman Mauro Lucero in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

October 31: Naseem Hamed shows more tricks than treats as he outslicks game Wayne McCullough over 12 rounds in a featherweight contest in Atlantic City. Hamed's 18-bout knockout streak ends as the Irishman does his best to press the action against a reluctant "Prince" ... On the same card, Vuyani Bungu again shows his world-class credentials as he outhustles Danny Romero for a 12-round decision in defense of the IBF junior featherweight title. It is Bungu's 12th successful defense ... In Big Bear, California, Oscar De La Hoya suffers a minor cut in training, pushing his WBC welterweight title defense against Ike Quartey back from November 21 to February 13.

November 6: The latest great to get the comeback bug is Thomas Hearns, who blasts out shopworn Jay Snyder in 88 seconds in his first bout in more than two years. Hearns, 40, is campaigning at cruiserweight.

November 13: Despite a prefight controversy, Ricardo Lopez and Rosendo Alvarez stage a memorable battle in their much-anticipated rematch in Las Vegas. The WBA/WBC unification of the 105-pound titles is scratched when Alvarez comes in overweight, but they agree to a higher weight limit, weigh in again the next day above the flyweight limit, and battle over 12 competitive rounds. Mexico's Lopez wins a 12-round split decision to add the vacant WBA title, and both announce plans to leave the strawweight ranks.


Hearns returns to kayo Snyder


Lopez and Alvarez stage a war in rematch

Hamed looks uncomfortable vs. McCullough

November 14: Roy Jones has an easy time with Canadian Otis Grant before winning by 10th-round TKO in Mashantucket, Connecticut, to retain the WBC and WBA light heavyweight titles. Jones has too much firepower for the game southpaw, who had previously campaigned as a middleweight ... On the same card, Shane Mosley has an equally easy time with outclassed Jesse James Leija on the way to a ninth-round stoppage to keep the IBF lightweight championship ... In Mont de Marsan, France, Fabrice Tiozzo has another light workout in dispatching Ezequiel Paixao in two rounds to keep the WBA cruiserweight belt.

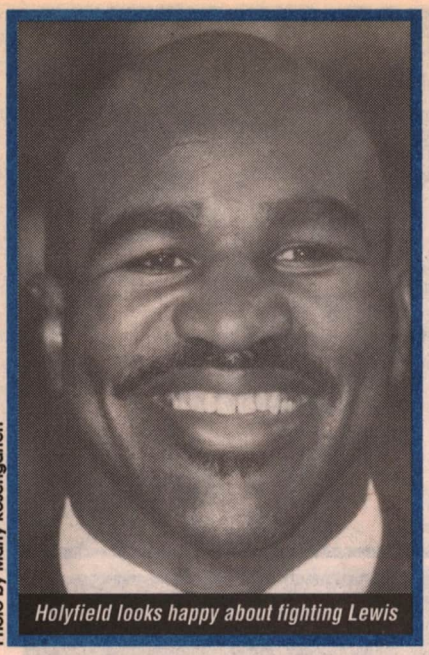


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Holyfield looks happy about fighting Lewis

November 19: In one of the year's major news events, representatives of Evander Holyfield and Lennox Lewis announce that they have reached an agreement for a March 13 date in New York City's Madison Square Garden. The heavyweight unification deal comes after weeks of intense negotiations between promoters, managers, and pay-per-view distributors.

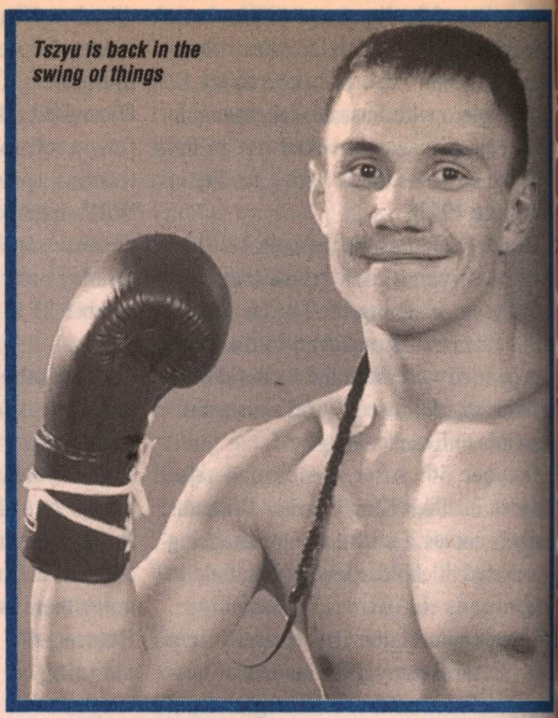
November 26: Saman Sorjaturong survives one of the closest defenses of his tenure, eking out a decision over Mexican Ladislao Vazquez in Pathum Thani, Thailand, to retain the WBC 108-pound title.

November 28: Kostya Tszyu, the Australian-based Russian, emerges on top of a thrilling shootout with late substitute Diobelys Hurtado, surviving two knockdowns in the opening round to rally for a fifth-round stoppage. Is the WBC super lightweight title, vacant since Oscar De La Hoya moved up in weight nearly two years earlier, finally settled? Not really. Tszyu is the "interim" champ, but still must face Miguel Angel Gonzalez, who pulled out with a training injury ... WBC featherweight champion Luisito Espinoza has no trouble with three-time world champion Kennedy McKinney on the undercard, defending the belt with a second-round knockout. The Filipino champion has been one of the sport's best-kept secrets, but no longer.

December 4: The reign of WBC flyweight titlist Chatchai Dutchboy Gym comes to an end at the hands of little-known Filipino Manny Pacquiao in Phuttamonthon, Thailand. Though Chatchai is comfortably ahead going into the eighth, young Pacquiao explodes and knocks out the champion.

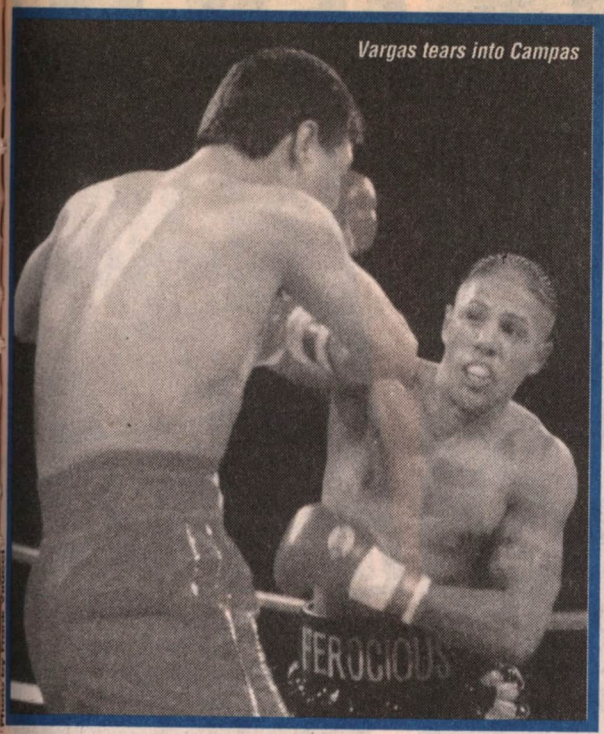
December 5: Johnny Tapia steps up in weight and wins the WBA bantamweight championship with a convincing but dull decision over hard-punching Nana Konadu in Atlantic City. Tapia's quickness and skills are unaffected by the three-pound jump in weight ... In a thriller on the same card, James Page holds off dangerous Jose Luis Lopez, getting off the canvas to take a 12-round decision in defense of the WBA welterweight championship.

December 8: Former light heavyweight champion Archie Moore, 84, dies in San Diego, California. Moore, 194-26-8 (141), held the title from December 1952 until February '62, and made nine successful defenses. He failed in two bids to win the heavyweight title, losing to Rocky Marciano in '55 and Floyd Patterson in '56. Moore was elected to the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1990 and holds the record for the most knockout victories of all-time.



Tszyu is back in the swing of things

Pacquiao and Chatchai before the belt changed hands



Vargas tears into Campas

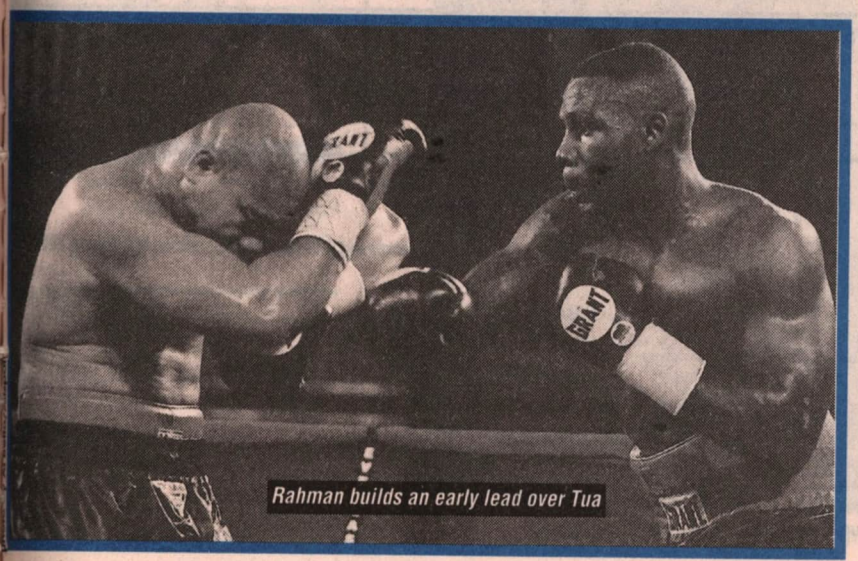
December 12: Fernando Vargas, the youngest U.S. Olympian in 1996, shows youth can be better than experience as he ends the 154-pound run of Yory Boy Campas to take the IBF championship in Atlantic City. Campas suffers a broken nose and badly swollen right eye before quitting on his stool after seven rounds of punishment ... In the main event of the same show, Ivan Robinson repeats his win over Arturo Gatti over 10 rounds in a lightweight bout. The contest is a thriller, but cannot match the drama of the first slugfest, as Robinson has an easier time en route to a unanimous decision ... It was expected by many that Enrique Sanchez' reign as WBA junior feather champ wouldn't last long, and, in fact, it ends in his first defense. Nestor Garza bloodies and batters the champion over 12 exciting rounds to capture a decision and the title in Indio, California ... In Frankfurt, Germany, WBC cruiserweight champ Juan Carlos Gomez continues his run of easy defenses by taking Amercian challenger Rodney Gordon out in the second round.

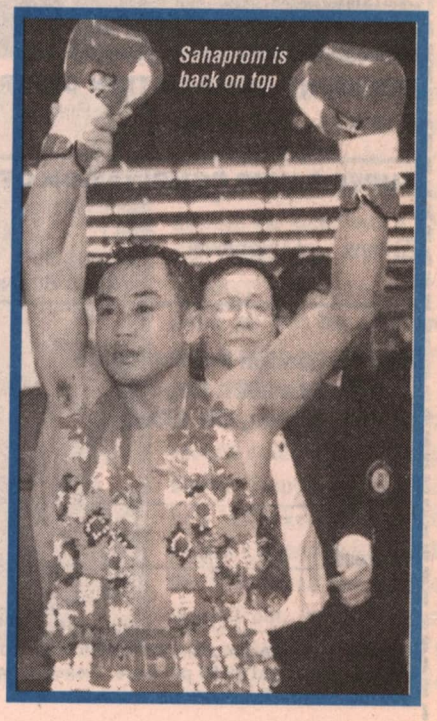
December 18: The IBF junior flyweight title vacated by Mauricio Pastrana is filled in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, when Will Grigsby outpoints Ratanapol Sor Vorapin over 12 rounds ... On the same show, Christy Martin suffers her first loss in nearly 10 years—and only the second defeat of her career—when undefeated but unknown Sumya Anani batters "The Coal Miner's Daughter" en route to a 10-round decision win.

December 19: In a battle between two young talents to determine supremacy at 130 pounds as well as decide the race for THE RING's Fighter of the Year award, Floyd Mayweather Jr. shockingly routs Angel Manfredy, stopping "El Diablo" with a barrage in the second round in Miami, Florida. Manfredy, bidding for the WBC super feather belt held by Mayweather, angrily opposes the referee's stoppage, but no one can dispute the dominance shown by Mayweather ... On the same show, a battle for the IBF's number-one heavyweight ranking comes to a controversial finish when David Tua rallies from behind to stop Hasim Rahman. Tua had hurt "The Rock" with a left hook after the bell to end the ninth, and capitalized in the 10th with a barrage that led to a questionable intervention by referee Telis Assimenios.

December 23: Veteran Jesus "Kiki" Rojas upsets WBA junior bantam champ Satoshi Iida in Nagoya, Japan, winning a unanimous decision. Iida dislocates his right shoulder in the fifth round, and fights on bravely but unsuccessfully.

December 29: Joichiro Tatsuyoshi, called "The Japanese Gatti" for his exciting style and tremendous popularity in his homeland, shows Gatti-like vulnerability when he loses the WBC bantamweight title to Veerapol Sahaprom in Osaka, Japan. The Thailander stops Tatsuyoshi in the sixth. ■


Rahman builds an early lead over Tua


Sahaprom is back on top

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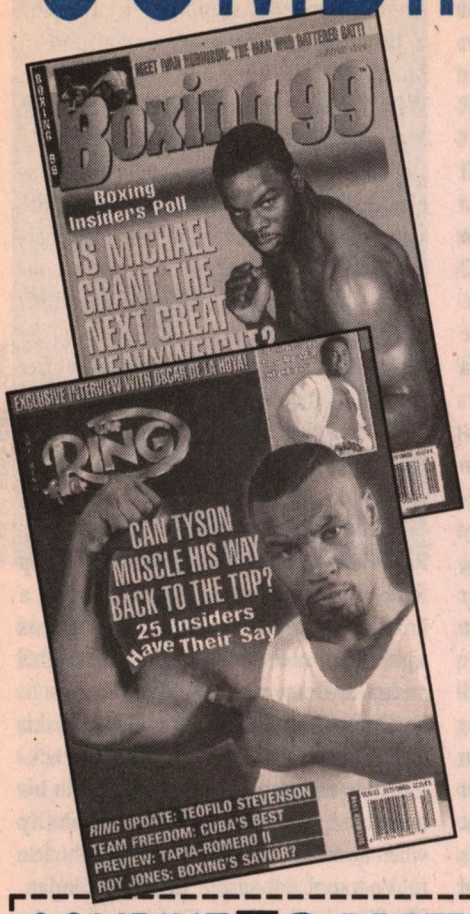

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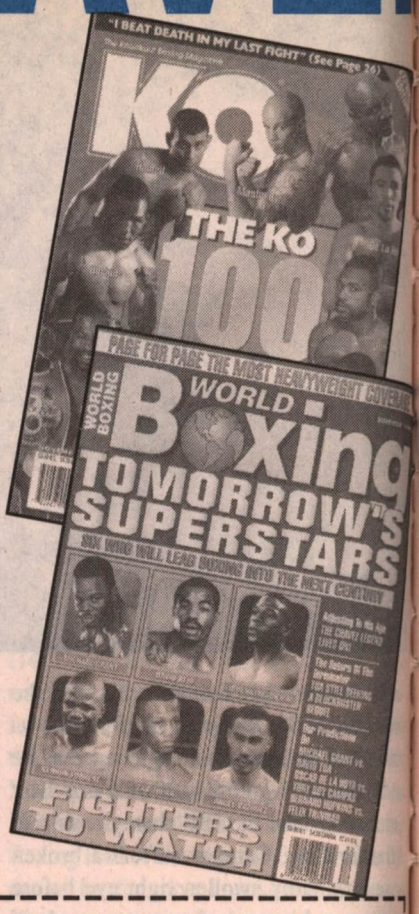

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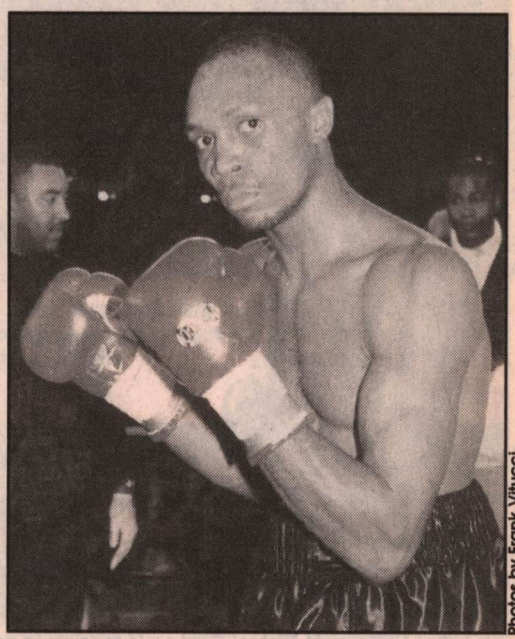
NEW FACES

RICHARD HALL

Light Heavyweight

By Joe Santoliquito



Photos by Frank Vitucci

Richard Hall called his grandmother "Honey." She was an ever-present figure for him growing up in Jamaica. She nurtured him, raised him since he was a year old. She was the one soothing force in his young, turbulent life, yet she wouldn't understand this. Definitely not this.

Hall woke up with an insatiable urge after watching the Marvin Hagler-Ray Leonard bout the previous night. He had to shave his head, just like Hagler. Oh, there was one other thing—Hall wanted to box.

"I woke up the next morning and told my grandmother that I wanted to be a fighter like the guys we saw on TV last night," said Hall, who speaks with a slight Jamaican accent. "I remember she said, 'You want to be like those guys we saw beating each other up? What are you, crazy or something?'"

Hall's been crazy ever since. A two-time Jamaica national champion, he's making inroads as a professional in the light heavyweight division, rising through the ranks with a 23-1 (22) record. The 6'3" Hall is a rangy southpaw with a quick jab who has developed into a more versatile fighter over the last few years.

The lone blemish on his record came against tough Rocky Gannon in 1996. Hall had knocked down the rugged Gannon twice, but by the third round had punched himself out, leaving the veteran a fatigued opponent to

(Continued on page 81)

Hall needed only three rounds to stop Bigeni

PRO RECORD

1993		
June 25	Francisco Harris, Winter Haven, FL	KO 2
July 2	Lou Gallucci, Daytona, FL	KO 3
Aug. 4	Willie Driver, Winter Haven	KO 4
1994		
Jan. 4	Mark Buchannon, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	KO 4
March 10	Keith Brunck, Hialeah, FL	KO 2
May 20	Willis Dollard, Punta Gorda, FL	KO 3
1995		
Jan. 27	Francisco Pena, Miami Beach	KO 1
March 25	Willie Driver, Miami Beach	KO 3
May 25	Juan Hunter, Glen Burnie, MD	W 6
June 17	Robert Britt, Las Vegas	KO 1
Aug. 3	Barry Tolbert, Las Vegas	KO 5
Sept. 29	Sharman Brown, Prima Donna, NV	KO 2
Oct. 12	Kertis Mingo, Washington, D.C.	KO 4
Nov. 4	Calvin Combs, Las Vegas	KO 2
1996		
Jan. 15	Kevin Whaley-El, Woodbridge, NJ	KO 4
Feb. 2	Ken McCurdy, Las Vegas	KO 2
April 13	Jose Torres, Boston	KO 2
June 4	Rocky Gannon, Las Vegas	KO by 10
Dec. 10	Eric Rhinehart, Columbia, SC	KO 2
1997		
June 21	Mark Peters, Tampa	KO 7
Oct. 7	Joseph Harris, Nashville	KO 2
Dec. 20	Karl Willis, Miami Beach	KO 3
1998		
April 30	Gary Ballard, Ft. Lauderdale	KO 3
Dec. 5	Anthony Bigeni, Atlantic City	KO 3

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DREW	KOs
24	23	1	0	22

CAMERA CLICKS

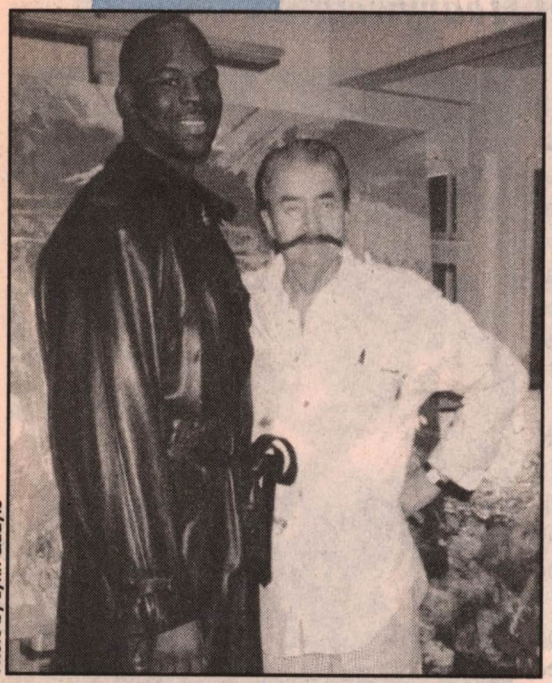


Photo by Lynn Quayle

Big-hitting heavyweight Michael Grant could certainly be considered a knockout artist, but fortunately for LeRoy Neiman, he doesn't specialize in knocking out artists. The two great talents got together in November '98 at Neiman's New York studio.

Photo by Tom Casino/USSB

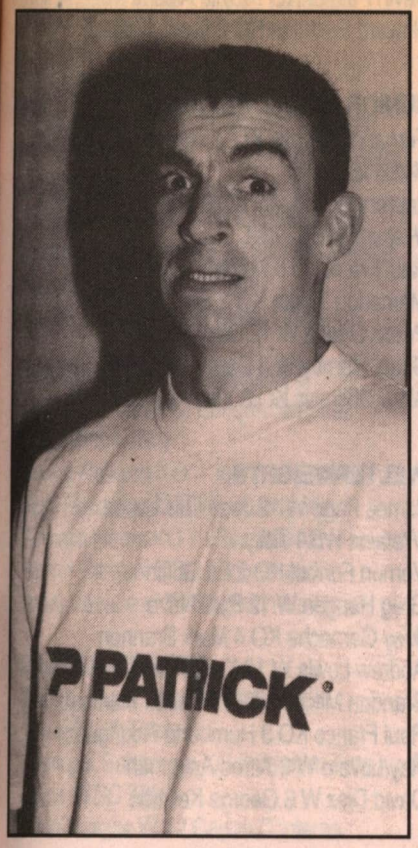
If you like women's boxing, you surely found a whole lot of woman to love when female heavyweights Kesha Snow and Mary Barnes let it all hang out in December. Snow, on the left, utilized her weight advantage—233 pounds to Barnes' 231—to earn a four-round decision victory.

Photo by Frank Vitucci

With cigar in hand, the Don King mascot made an appearance at the electric-haired promoter's return to Atlantic City in December. The televised portion of the show came in like a lion with the excellent James Page-Jose Luis Lopez duel, but there should have been a lamb mascot on hand to represent the way the show went out with the Johnny Tapia-Nana Konadu bout.

Photo by Tom Casino/USSB

After heavyweight contender Shannon Briggs scored a one-round knockout of Marcus Rhode in December, the important work began: attending to Briggs' hair. The dreadlocked Brooklyn native's manager, Marc Roberts, shown on the far left side of the photo, obviously doesn't have to worry about such things.



Remember that scene in **Full Metal Jacket** *when Private Joker has to show the drill instructor his "war face" and, despite his best efforts, is told to "Work on it!" If this is WBC super middleweight champ Richie Woodhall's idea of a war face, we're not particularly intimidated.*

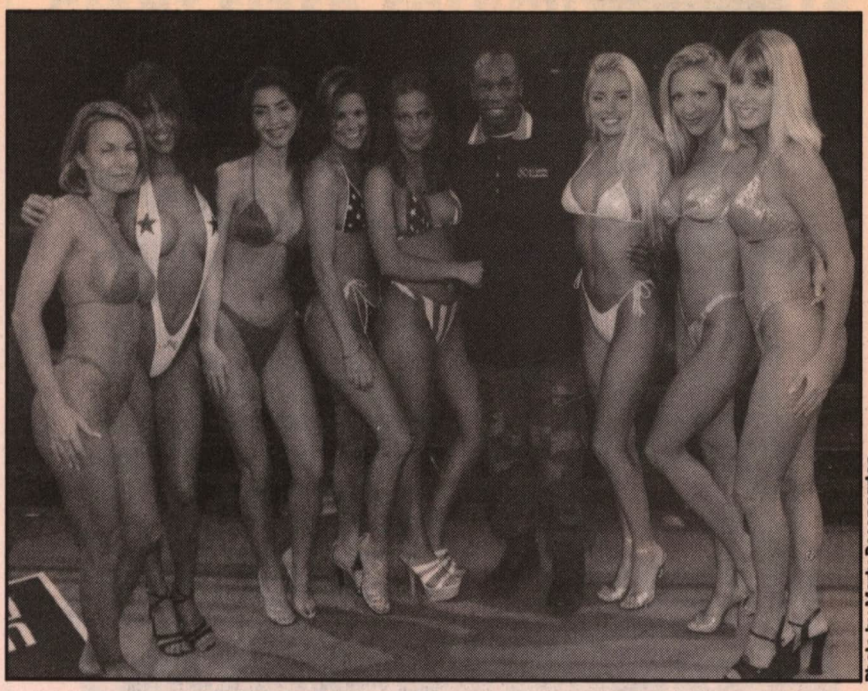


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

IBF bantamweight champ Tim Austin hasn't been particularly active lately as a fighter, so he decided to earn some extra cash by working as a round card girl at a Don King card in December. Here, "The Cincinnati Kid" poses with his co-workers.

NOSTALGIA CORNER

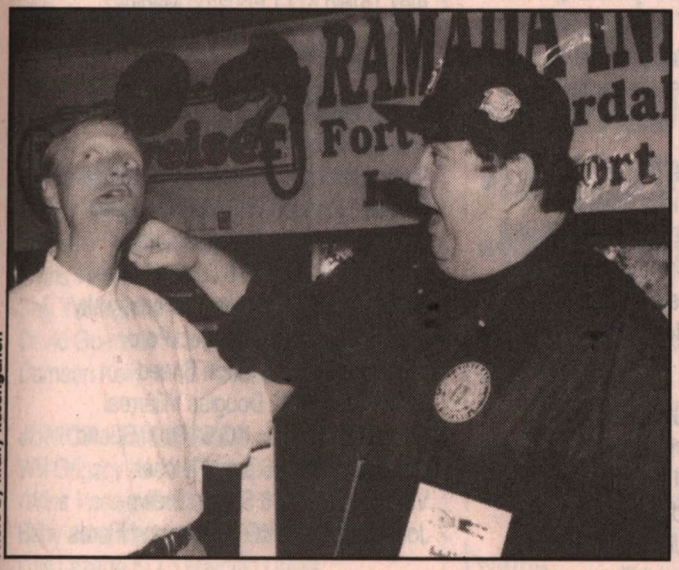
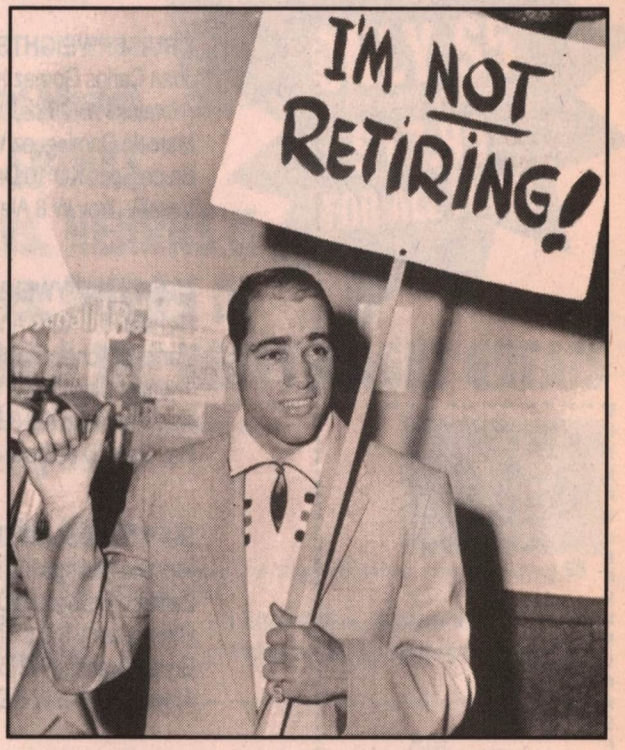


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

It's Showtime! Ring announcer Jimmy Lennon Jr. accidentally announced Col. Bob Sheridan's weight a few pounds too high, and paid the price courtesy of a right to the jaw by the television commentator.



Despite having suffered several knockout defeats, Carl "Bobo" Olson was quite explicit in this photo from 1956 in his attempts to quell rumors that he was calling it quits. In fact, the former middleweight champ continued to fight for another 10 years before finally retiring.

SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS
David Tua KO 10 Hasim Rahman
Kirk Johnson D 10 Al Cole
Jesse Ferguson W 10 Obed Sullivan
Shannon Briggs KO 1 Marcus Rhode
Ross Puritty KO 11 Wladimir Klitschko
Vitali Klitschko KO 1 Francesco Spinelli
Larry Donald W 10 Mike Sedillo
Buster Douglas KO 1 Warren Williams
Bonecrusher Smith KO 2 David Slaughter
Brian Nielsen KO 2 Dan Murphy
Phil Jackson KO 2 Ray Anis
Ed Mahone KO 3 Booker Word
Terrance Lewis KO 2 Derek Amos
Melvin Foster W 10 Jade Scott
Willi Fischer KO 2 Jason Yarosz
Asmir Vojnovic KO 10 Tudor Panait
Maurice Harris KO 4 Art Pendergrass
Tony LaRosa W 8 Dwight Qawi
Oleg Maskaev W 8 Mo Wilson
Ramon Garbey KO 2 Clifford Nellon
Nate Jones W 6 Joseph Vegas
Duncan Dokiwari W 4 Miguel Otero
Alonzo Highsmith D 6 Reggie Miller

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Juan Carlos Gomez KO 2 Rodney Gordon
(Retains WBC Title)
Marcelo Dominguez W 10 Miguel Robledo
Bruce Scott KO 10 Darren Corbett
Vassiliy Jirov W 8 Alexander Vasilev

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Richard Hall KO 3 Anthony Bigeni
Dariusz Michalczewski KO 9 Drake Thadzi
Thomas Ulrich KO 3 Vinson Durham
Ivan Camacho KO 3 Reuben Ruiz
Ray Berry D 8 Glenn Robinson

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Thulane Malinga KO 9 Peter Madsen
Zaffarou Ballogou KO 1 Tony Pope
Glenn Catley KO 5 Andy Flute
Bryant Brannon KO 5 Jeff Johnson
Anwar Oshana W 8 Daniel Thomas

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Ryan Rhodes KO 1 Fidel Avendano
Mppush Makambi KO 8 Adrian Dodson
Rito Ruvalcaba KO 2 Peter Venancio
Kevin Palmer KO 7 Ernie Alesna
Howard Eastman KO 7 Steve Foster

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Fernando Vargas KO 7 Yory Boy Campas
(Wins IBF Title)
Laurent Boudouani KO 9 Terry Norris
(Retains WBA Title)
Raul Frank KO 5 Michael Corleone
Mamadou Thiam KO 2 Said Bennajem
Pedro Ortega W 12 Larry Dixon
Saoul Mamby W 8 Darren McGrew
Akira Ohigashi KO 8 Yasuhide Tarui

WELTERWEIGHTS
James Page W 12 Jose Luis Lopez
(Retains WBA Title)
Vernon Forrest KO 2 Ed Griffin
Greg Haugen W 12 Paul Nave
Joey Gamache KO 4 Mark Brannon
Andrew Lewis W 12 Teddy Reid
Brandon Mitchem W 10 Carlos Martinez
Raul Franco KO 3 Humberto Rodriguez
Ray Lovato W 6 Alfred Ankamah
David Diaz W 6 George Kellman

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
Antonio Diaz W 12 Cory Spinks
Freddie Pendleton KO 7 Freddy Rojas
Paul Burke W 12 Eamonn Magee
Julian Wheeler W 12 Victor McKinnis
George Scott KO 6 Rudi Valentino
Randall Bailey KO 2 Manuel DeLeon
Alex Trujillo KO 1 Eduardo Martinez
Sumya Anani W 10 Christy Martin

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Ivan Robinson W 10 Arturo Gatti
Phillip Holiday KO 7 Jose Luis Baltazar
Freddie Norwood W 8 Moi Rodriguez
Julien Lorcy KO 1 Fernando Alanis
Lovemore N'dou KO 6 Justin Rowsell
Billy Irwin KO 8 Charles Tschorniawsky
Paul Spadafora KO 10 Dezi Ford
Wilfrido Ruiz KO 4 Eldon Sneed
Juan Prado W 12 Douglas Villarreal
Edson Nascimento KO 5 Hiram Bueno
Calvin Davis KO 6 Troy Fletcher
Vivian Harris KO 6 Shawn Brown
Joel Casamayor KO 2 Raymond Flores

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
Floyd Mayweather Jr. KO 2 Angel Manfredy
(Retains WBC Title)
Diego Corrales W 12 Gary St. Clair
Carlos Gerena KO 4 Juan Manuel Chavez

John Palaki Tech. Win 6 Miguel Arrozal
Koji Arisawa W 10 Panther Yanagida
Dean Pithie KO 7 Kelton McKenzie

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Hector Lizarraga W 10 William Abelyian
Richard DeJesus W 10 Orlando Canizales
Carlos Rios W 10 Roque Cassiani
Ferid Ben Jeddou KO 5 Carlos Gomez
Bernardo Quinones KO 9 Ernesto Medina
Kozo Ishii KO 4 Jake Carte
Patrick Mullings KO 2 Marty Chestnut

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Nestor Garza W 12 Enrique Sanchez
(Wins WBA Title)
Carlos Navarro KO 4 Johnny Armour
Guty Espadas W 10 Ricardo Medina
Bernard Harris KO 7 Elias Juarez
Simon Ramoni KO 2 Michael Alldis
Israel Vazquez KO 8 Agustin Lorenzo

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Johnny Tapia W 12 Nana Konadu
(Wins WBA Title)
Veerapol Sahaprom KO 6 Joichiro Tatsuyoshi
(Wins WBC Title)
Adan Vargas W 12 Carlos Conteras
Mauricio Martinez KO 10 Edgar Jasso
Paul Lloyd KO 12 Luigi Mancini
Johnny Bredahl KO 3 Xolile Ndleceni
Masamori Tokuyama KO 5 Hiroki Ioka

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Jesus Rojas W 12 Satoshi Iida
(Wins WBA Title)
Ratanachai Sor Vorapin KO 2 Jesus Garcia
Hideki Todaka W 10 Young Soon Chang
Hidenobu Honda KO 3 Jun Davalos
Nkosana Vaaltein KO 6 David Vinger

FLYWEIGHTS

Manny Pacquiao KO 8
Chatchai Dutchboy Gym
(Wins WBC Title)
Keiji Yamaguchi W 10 Nolito Cabato
David Guerault W 8 Gheroghe Ghiompirica
Damaen Kelly W 12 Alfonso Zvenyika

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Will Grigsby W 12 Ratanapol Sor Vorapin
(Wins Vacant IBF Title)
Baby Jake Matlala W 12 Rafael Orozco
Luis Lazarte KO 5 Marcelo Davila
Oscar Andrade W 12 Hugo Romero

STRAWWEIGHTS

Edgar Cardenas W 12 Juan Alfonso Keb Baas
Jose Sanjuanelo KO 8 Oswaldo Guerrero

KO PRESENTS

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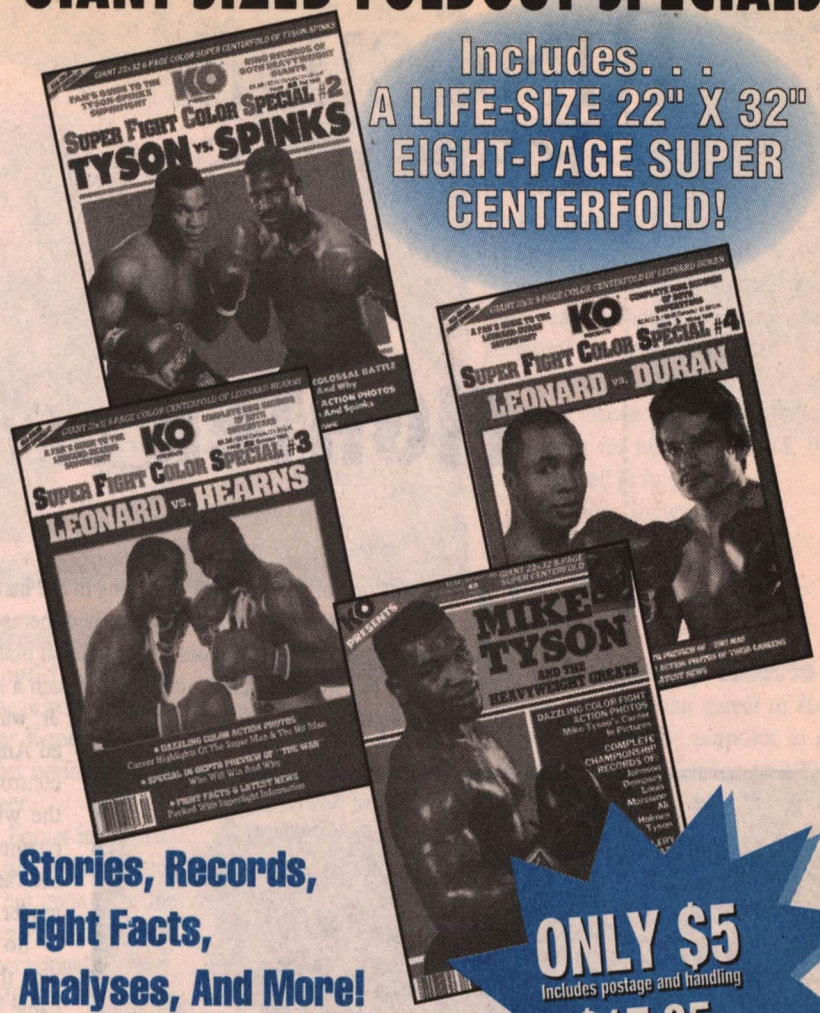

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RINGSIDE REPORTS

FIGHTER *of the* MONTH

This was one of the toughest decisions in the history of selecting the Fighter of the Month, as no fewer than four candidates distinguished themselves with spectacular victories during this time period. Luisito Espinosa looked sensational blasting out Kennedy McKinney in two rounds, but ultimately we felt that McKinney, coming off such a long layoff, *might* have been a shot fighter, thus tainting the victory slightly. Floyd Mayweather Jr. was downright dazzling in stopping highly regarded Angel Manfredy in two rounds, but the somewhat controversial stoppage detracted a bit of luster from the win. And Fernando Vargas dominated proven champion Yory Boy Campas over seven rounds, but the fact that Campas quit partially as a result of his tender skin worked against Vargas a bit in our minds.

So in the end, we went with Page, whose victory was the least one-sided of the bunch, but probably came over the most talented opponent and certainly required the most heart. Jose Luis Lopez sent Page to the deck in the third and showed a chin unlike anything Page had ever faced, but the WBA welterweight champ made crucial midfight adjustments, never stopped working, and earned every bit of his unanimous decision. Having superior talent is always nice, but those who have to rely on more than just their natural ability, as Page did, are the ones who deserve to be honored.

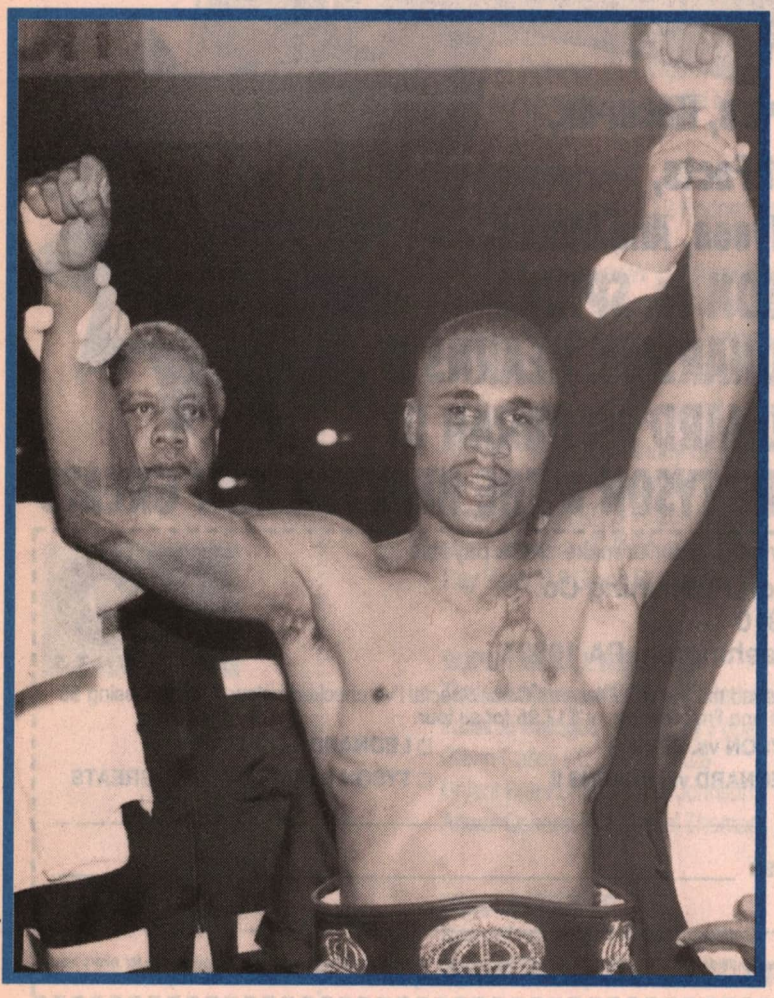
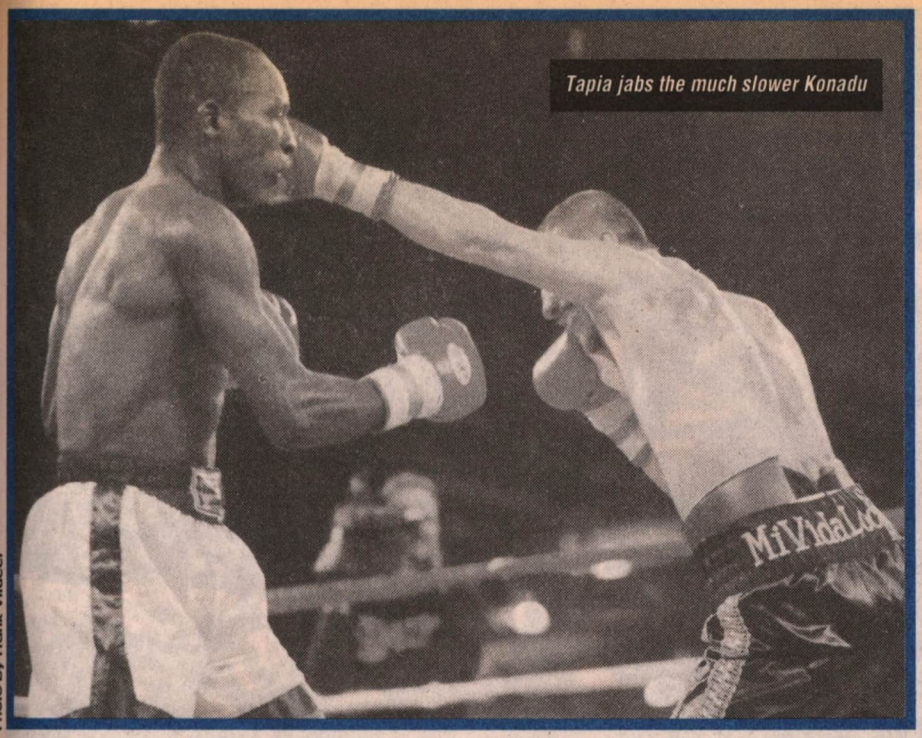


Photo by Frank Vitucci

• • • •

James Page



Tapia jabs the much slower Konadu

Photo by Frank Vitucci

of the fight, but missed virtually every shot and soon returned to his hit-and-run tactics.

Franco Priani (Italy) somehow came up with a 114-114 stalemate, but was overruled by John Poturaj (USA) and Uriel Aguilera (Colombia), who both voted for Tapia by scores of 115-112 and 116-111, respectively. THE RING had Tapia winning by a tally of 118-113.

The show marked Don King's return to Atlantic City following an eight-year absence. The controversial promoter had been prevented from doing business in the East Coast gambling mecca while under federal indictment for insurance fraud, but was acquitted in July.

Television: Showtime

(12-5-98)

Nigel Collins

Johnny Tapia W 12 Nana Konadu

Atlantic City, New Jersey: Moving up to full-fledged bantamweight earned Tapia another title, but may have cost him a lot of fans, as his 12-round majority decision over Konadu for the WBA bantamweight belt was probably the most boring fight of the Albuquerque, New Mexico, native's pro career.

Big punches? There were none. Highlights? Forget it. Thrills? You've got to be kidding. Tapia, 45-0-2 (24), still performed his trademark back flip when the match was over, but gone were the fiery, two-fisted flurries that have always been so much of his appeal, replaced by unremitting lateral movement and an occasional counter.

"It wasn't a crowd-pleasing fight," said Freddie Roach, Tapia's new trainer, "but Johnny had to fight that way because Konadu is capable of putting you in danger with one punch. We wanted to stay away from his power."

Mission accomplished. But at what cost? Boos began to cascade down from the stands in the fourth round, and the announced crowd of 6,124 continued to vent its displeasure throughout the lackluster contest.

There's no disputing Tapia's marvelous boxing skills, and despite suffering a small cut in the corner of his right eye in the third, he was barely touched during his masterful display of defensive wizardry. It was circle to the left, throw a punch, reverse direction, throw a punch, then repeat the process again. And again, and again, ad nauseum.

Defending champion Konadu, 39-4-1 (32), dutifully applied pressure, but seldom got within punching range and spent most of the bout in an even greater state of frustration than those watching the passive proceedings. At age 33, the hard-hitting Ghanaian lacked the hand and foot speed to catch up with his ever-retreating rival. Konadu, 117½, did score a knockdown in the 11th, but referee Frank Cappuccino was just about the only person at the Atlantic City Convention Center who didn't realize it was a slip. Tapia responded to the alleged knockdown with his biggest volley

Laurent Boudouani KO 9 Terry Norris

Paris, France: When he brought the illustrious career of Hall of Famer Sugar Ray Leonard for all intents and purposes to an ignominious conclusion at Madison Square Garden in 1991, Norris vowed he would not end up battered and bloodied as he walked to the exit like his hero. The reality for the 31-year-old native of Lubbock, Texas, now residing in San Diego, California, is much worse.

Leonard emerged with his smile, handsome features, and health gloriously intact. Norris' alarmingly slurred speech and disturbingly bad balance suggest a more ominous fate just around the corner. Without question, this should be his last fight.

"It had to happen one day," acknowledged Norris adviser Mike Marley. "Everyone, even the greatest, arrives one day at the end of the line. As to whether Terry ought to end his prodigious career, well, even Stevie Wonder can see that."

One can't help but wonder why Marley could not see that two months earlier when Norris was badly beaten by Dana Rosenblatt.

Boudouani, 153½, France, in retaining the WBA junior middleweight title for the fourth time, made it abundantly clear that Norris, 154, belongs inside a ring no more, and, mercifully, Norris acknowledged as much.

"I'm retiring," he announced after his father, Orlin Norris Sr., threw in the towel at 2:59 of round nine. "I respect my father's decision, and now I'm going to give myself time to reflect on what I'm going to do."

From the moment he arrived in France a day late due to visa problems, Norris was swimming against the tide. At the weigh-in, he scaled more than three pounds over the limit before spending two hours on a treadmill and returning just on the mark. Boudouani, 31, was in no mood for any sentiment. This was his first defense on French soil, and he intended to put on a show for the capacity crowd at the Palais des Sports in the Porte de Versailles.

Photo by Holly Stein/HBO

Tszyu's power left Hurtado reeling

He drew blood from the challenger's nose as early as the second when Norris fell to the floor in a clinch, though the American had a better round in the third. Norris came out early for the fourth, but was stunned and staggered for the first time by two left hooks, a heavy right, and another hook. Norris survived and had successful moments in the fifth, knocking Boudouani's head back with a left and solid right. But he encountered a bad sixth, hurt early on by a right cross and left hook, and could only be relieved that the Frenchman did not press home his advantage. Even when he wobbled Norris with a hard left hook, Boudouani could not force a stoppage.

Norris made it through rounds seven and eight, too, but was in trouble again early in the ninth, the champion landing almost at will with the right hand. The challenger retreated to the ropes and was overwhelmed with blows before the towel was thrown in and referee Waldemar Schmidt (Puerto Rico) intervened.

"He surprised me with his resistance—he wanted it," said the magnanimous Frenchman. The three judges, Gustavo Padilla (Panama), Jose Laurino (Uruguay), and Samuel Conde (Puerto Rico), all had Boudouani well ahead. Norris had been brave, but not competitive, and it is to be hoped he remains true to his word and does quit.

Promoter: AB Stars Productions

(11-30-98)

Brian Doogan

Kostya Tszyu KO 5 Diobelys Hurtado

Indio, California: Tszyu may never bother to expand beyond a pure power game. Hurtado, like the rest of his Team Freedom mates, may never find a way to sustain his effectiveness beyond a few rounds. And the WBC may never declare a champion to wear its 140-pound belt, which has been vacant since Oscar De La Hoya moved up to welterweight in April '97. But while this fight at the Fantasy Springs Casino for the "interim" WBC super lightweight title didn't alter anybody's reputation or status significantly, that doesn't mean it wasn't any fun.

Tszyu, 139, and Hurtado, 139¼, engaged in a wild opening stanza worthy of Round of the Year consideration. The fast-starting Sydney, Australia-based Russian cracked Hurtado with a brutal right-left combination to the chin less than a minute into the fight, sending the Cuban refugee (who resides in Miami, Florida) to a knee for a brief count. Hurtado wobbled back toward his opponent unsteadily, but when Tszyu moved in for the kill, Hurtado dropped the former IBF junior welter champ with a sudden counter right hand. Tszyu was unfazed, but fell into the same trap again moments later when another counter right caused him to pitch forward and touch his gloves to the canvas. Tszyu bounced back to finish strongly with several combinations just before the bell, but a nasty mouse had developed under his right eye by the end of the action-packed first round.

After a sloppy second round by both men, the 26-year-old Hurtado began using his speed, seven-inch reach advantage, and boxing skills in the third, while Tszyu, 29, patiently waited for opportunities to employ his straight-ahead power. He started finding those opportunities in the fourth, working the body effectively as Hurtado, in typical converted-Cuban-amateur fashion, started to

show signs of fading. Perhaps the fact that Hurtado, a late substitute for the injured Miguel Angel Gonzalez, had fought a 10-rounder just 15 days earlier had something to do with how quickly he weakened.

Hurtado's legs were allowing him to run less and less, and, working behind a hard jab, Tszyu, 22-1-1 (18), caught up to him in the fifth with a three-punch combination to the body and head. Hurtado, 28-2 (19), wisely took a knee, but after absorbing a right to the head and crisp left hook to the ribcage upon rising, the Cuban went down again, prompting referee James Jen Kin (USA) to call a halt at 2:35 of the round.

Though the interim title belt was strapped around Tszyu's waist following the victory, he won't be recognized as the WBC champion until his twice-postponed fight with Gonzalez comes off. That fight is tentatively scheduled for March 6, provided both men can stay healthy.

Television: HBO

Promoters: America Presents, Main Events

(11-28-98)

Fabrice Tiozzo KO 2 Ezequiel Paixao

Mont de Marsan, France: Having dispensed with the latest undemanding challenge to his authority at cruiserweight, Tiozzo, 188¾, France, hinted he is ready to step up to heavyweight immediately following his second-round knockout of Paixao, 183½, Brazil, to retain the WBA title at the Espace Francois Mitterand. It was his second defense.

Former WBC light heavyweight champion Tiozzo believes there are few valid tests of his ability within the cruiserweight division, as only matches with the likes of Marcelo Dominguez, Tommy Hearns, or Virgil Hill—his only conqueror—appeal to him. Paixao, 33, was the WBA's mandatory challenger, while the next mandatory, Mexican Saul Montana, will send nobody's pulse racing. No wonder Tiozzo is looking toward heavyweight.

"To do that I would need to put on about 14, 15 pounds of muscle," said Tiozzo, who barely worked up a sweat in ripping through Paixao. "It won't be just to win a few fights; it will be to win the title. Evander Holyfield frightens everybody, but he doesn't impress me. Lennox Lewis is good for nothing, and Mike Tyson is washed-up. I fancy my chances against any of them."

They will hardly fold like Paixao. Tiozzo, 40-1 (26), found his range with the left jab from the outset. A good right jab then sent Paixao, 30-6 (21), to the floor, though the bell intervened before the 29-year-old champ could finish the job. It merely postponed the inevitable. A solid right again in the second connected flush with Paixao's jaw, and he was counted out at 1:04 of round two.

"I throw fewer punches now, but I punch 10 times harder," said Tiozzo, who could be persuaded to stay at cruiserweight a while longer should he land a unification fight with IBF titleholder Arthur Williams.

Promoter: Don King

(11-14-98)

Brian Doogan

Photo by Tom Casino/USSB

Cole kept it close, and then Johnson low-blew it

Kirk Johnson D 10 Al Cole

New York, New York: Most ringsiders at the Roseland Ballroom, a converted dance club in the heart of Manhattan's Times Square area, expected this to be a sleep-inducing bout. It was generally assumed that Johnson, 226, North Preston, Nova Scotia, a talented but often unmotivated former Olympic representative for his native Canada, and Cole, 226, Spring Valley, New York, a one-time IBF cruiserweight champion, would waltz through a dull affair at the fabled nightclub. Instead, the fight turned out to be a see-saw battle that often had the 1,400 paying fans on their feet and is worthy of consideration as the best heavyweight fight of the year.

When Johnson slipped to the canvas in the first round, referee Wayne Kelly (USA) erroneously ruled it a knockdown, giving Cole a jumpstart on the scorecards. Coupled with the three points

Johnson lost for low blows in the fifth, seventh, and 10th rounds, Cole, whose lower lip was severely cut, managed to salvage a controversial draw.

After the spurious knockdown in the first round, Johnson, 26, roared back and staggered Cole, 34, with a powerful right hand. The remainder of the fight was a rip-snorting battle that saw both fighters tottering on numerous occasions. Volleys of bodyblows and thunderous headpunches were landed regularly by each contestant, and Johnson's seemingly unintentional low blows were thrown in the midst of offensive onslaughts against his taller foe. The torrid pace continued into the 10th round when a vicious punch below the belt knocked Cole into the ropes, and necessitated him taking a three-minute reprieve. He came back full of fire, and the two continued their ceaseless punching until the bell. In both a figurative and literal sense, there were no losers in this punishing battle. Judges Melvina Lathan (USA) and Steve Weisfeld (USA) saw the fight 94-94, while Joe Dwyer (USA) had Cole ahead by 94-93.

Just a couple of days later, it was announced that a rematch was in the works. And this time, we'll look forward to it. Cole breathed new life into his dying career, and Johnson showed that when properly motivated he can fight like the dickens. Johnson remained unbeaten with a 26-0-1 (19) record, while Cole's ledger now reads 30-3-1 (15).

Television: USSB

Promoter: Cedric Kushner

(12-8-98)

Robert Mladinich

Jesse Ferguson W 10 Obed Sullivan

New York, New York: While nobody expected much drama in this classic crossroads bout at the Roseland Ballroom, even fewer people expected the well-traveled 41-year-old Ferguson, 235, Knightdale, North Carolina, to win. For many years he has been the unofficial gatekeeper to the heavyweight division's upper echelon, and it was expected that the younger Sullivan, 30, a native of Gulfport, Mississippi, now living in Phoenix, Arizona, would get back on the winning track with a victory over the seemingly shopworn veteran. Sullivan, 29-4-1 (20), had lost two of his last three fights, to top prospects Hasim Rahman and Michael Grant.

But Ferguson showed that he is still capable of beating any number of young guns when in the right frame of mind by winning a split decision over Sullivan and improving his record to 26-17 (16). From the first bell, both fighters landed heavy shots and tried desperately, albeit futilely, to score a knockout. Sullivan made the mistake of standing directly in front of Ferguson instead of trying to outbox him, and Ferguson capitalized, punching in effective spurts in every round. Each fighter was staggered on several occasions, but always rebounded quickly enough to make it interesting. There were no knockdowns.

Prior to the official decision being announced, Ferguson, who has been on the short end of many close decisions, looked down at the assembled press and frightfully predicted, "They're not gonna give it to me. They're gonna rob it from me." Much to his surprise and delight, that did not happen, and once again, after 15 years as a pro in which he has fought a veritable who's who of champions and contenders, Ferguson has a future. He hopes to parlay this vic-

Sullivan fought the wrong fight, and Ferguson made him pay

Photo by Tom Casino/USSB

tory into a high-paying gig on HBO, hopefully against Andrew Golota.

"I don't want a bunch of little fights to set myself up for another big fight," he said. "I wasn't supposed to beat Sullivan, but I did. That should be enough to get me a big fight right away. I more than paid my dues over the years. Now I hope to get a little payback."

A dejected Sullivan said he knows he could have done better, but insisted, "I won't leave the game until I know I gave it my all. This fight might have set me back a bit, but I'll be back. I'll keep coming back until I get this right."

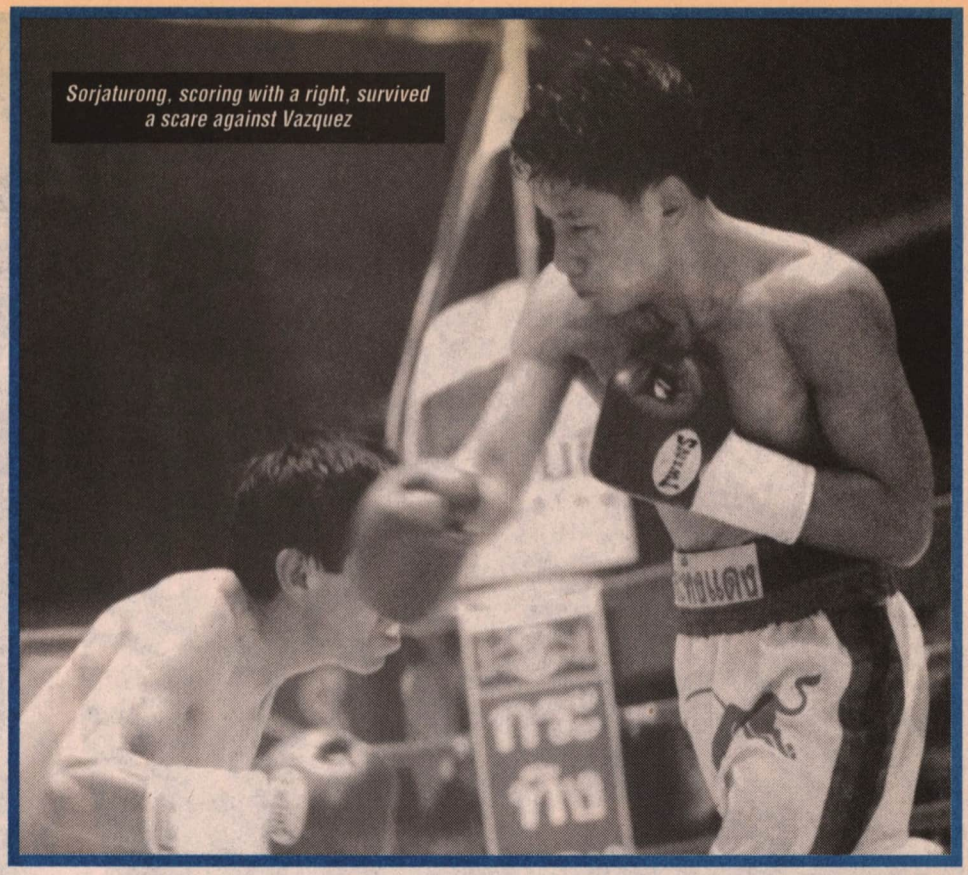
Judges Melvina Lathan (USA) and Harold Lederman (USA) saw the fight 96-94 for Ferguson, while Steve Weisfeld (USA) had it 96-94 for Sullivan. The referee was Steve Smoger (USA).

Television: USSB

Promoter: Cedric Kushner

(12-8-98)

Robert Mladinich



Sorjaturong, scoring with a right, survived a scare against Vazquez

Saman Sorjaturong W 12 Ladislao Vazquez

Pathum Thani, Thailand: Short but sturdy Thailander Sorjaturong, 107, barely kept the WBC light flyweight title, as he survived a fifth-round visit to the deck, fought back hard, and earned a close but unanimous decision over Mexican Vazquez, 107, over 12 heats at the Muang Thong Thani Sports Complex. Judges Cliff Heaver (Australia) and Franz Marti (Switzerland) both scored the bout 114-112, and Jaebong Kim (Korea) had it 115-113, all for Sorjaturong, who registered his 10th defense since dethroning Humberto "Chiquita" Gonzalez in 1995.

The champ's overconfidence may have been the reason this was such a tough battle. After the fighters probed each other with jabs in the first two rounds, Vazquez got his engine started with busier combinations in the third. In the closing seconds of the fourth, the Mexican stunned the champ with a right hand.

Vazquez landed a straight right followed by a wicked left hook midway through the fifth, and the 29-year-old Thailander dropped to the canvas. Sorjaturong, however, recovered quickly, and, as is his tendency after he's been hurt, retaliated furiously over the rest of the round.

Sorjaturong's situation worsened in the sixth when he sustained a gash over the left eye, but he took the round by pounding Vazquez with solid combos. A collision of heads had opened the cut on the champ, and also enlarged a gash on Vazquez that had developed in the opening round. Referee David Chung (Korea) strangely declared a deduction of a point from each contestant.

The game champ was in command from the seventh through ninth. But Vazquez displayed his determination by welcoming his second wind, and dominated the last three rounds by throwing far more blows than the fading champ. The Mexican's retaliations, however, weren't enough to overcome his early deficit on points. The hairline victory raised Sorjaturong's mark to 40-2-1 (31). Vazquez fell to 30-13-1 (13).

Sorjaturong is slated to make his next defense against Mexican strawweight champ Ricardo Lopez, who had annihilated the Thailander in two rounds in 1993 at 105 pounds. Sorjaturong has improved since, but Lopez promises to be his strongest opponent since winning the 108-pound crown 3½ years ago.

Promoter: Sahasombhop Srisomvongse

(11-26-98)

Joe Koizumi

Manny Pacquiao KO 8 Chatchai Dutchboy Gym

Phuttamonthon, Thailand: Filipino lefty Pacquiao, 112, captured the WBC flyweight title by withstanding the accurate sharpshooting of Chatchai, 112, and occasionally scoring heavy shots that took their toll. Pacquiao finally sank the defending champ with an explosive left hook at 2:54 of the eighth round at Tonsuk College Ground.

Pacquiao, who had just vacated the OPBF title he wrested by stopping Chokchai 3K Battery in five rounds in June of '97, was a prefight underdog due to his relative inexperience. The 28-year-old Chatchai, making his third defense, had dethroned previously unbeaten Yuri Arbachakov on a unanimous decision in Sapporo, Japan, in November of the previous year.

Photo by Frank Vitucci

Canizales and DeJesus went head to head, and the underdog got the nod

The faster and more clever champ took the initiative with his fine display of sharp combinations. The Thailander dominated the first three rounds, though Pacquiao threw back sporadic southpaw lefts. The Filipino took the fourth, however, when he stunned the champ with a solid left hand. Chatchai regained control in the fifth and coasted through the following two rounds as well, as he landed light but fast left-right combinations and left hooks to the game Filipino.

Trailing badly on the scorecards, Pacquiao suddenly went for the kill in the eighth. The Filipino put the pressure on the champ and pinned him in a neutral corner. Pacquiao unloaded a very strong left hook, and it met the champ's chin cleanly. Chatchai fell down face-first, tried to pull himself up before the count of 10, but was unable to rise.

Pacquiao, 21 (some Filipino people say he is still 19), raised his mark to 24-1 (15). The crestfallen Chatchai fell to 33-2 (24). The referee was Malcolm Bulner (Australia).

Promoter: Sahasombhop Srisomvongse

(12-4-98)

Joe Koizumi

Richard DeJesus W 10 Orlando Canizales

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Philadelphia, which uses the catch-phrase "The City That Loves You Back," wasn't the city that loved Canizales back. Philadelphia had been jolted nationally in the weeks just before Christmas over collapsing railings and failing clocks at Veterans Stadium, and received another knock for the questionable judging at the legendary Blue Horizon.

After pounding away actively but not very accurately for 10 rounds, DeJesus, 127¼, Wilmington, Delaware, was awarded a majority decision over former IBF bantamweight champion Canizales, 127¼, Laredo, Texas. When the verdict was announced, many spectators and journalists ringside were left scratching their heads in bewilderment. The exhausted DeJesus could barely raise his arms in victory, while Canizales made a mad dash for the dressing room in disgust.

Judge Robert Grasso (USA) scored it 95-95, while judge Tony Wolfe (USA) had it 96-94, and judge Adelaide Triplett (USA) scored it an outrageous 97-93, both in favor of DeJesus. THE RING found the decision to be far less disputable than most, scoring the fight 97-96 in favor of DeJesus.

The give-and-take of the fight was entertaining. There were hardly any clinches for referee Steve Smoger (USA) to part, giving the pro-DeJesus crowd a steady flow of action. DeJesus was the aggressor, yet it was Canizales, 49-4-1 (36), who tactically pecked away at the hard-charging DeJesus, 14-5 (4), throughout the early rounds. Canizales' most effective punch was the left hook, which he used to accurately dig into DeJesus' ribs.

After the fifth round, the workrate of Canizales, 34, decreased, and it was DeJesus, 31, who did most of the punching. He repeatedly used his overhand right to penetrate Canizales' defenses and was on the offensive over the second half of the contest, trapping Canizales against the ropes and in the corners.

The two went toe-to-toe in the final round, taking turns pounding away on each other until the sound of the final bell, which was drowned out by the applause of the sellout crowd.

Punchstats revealed Canizales connected on 266 of 567 punches thrown, for 47 percent. DeJesus threw 790 punches, scoring 156 times for a 20 percent connect rate.

"It was a bad decision," said ESPN2 boxing analyst Teddy Atlas, who scored the fight 96-94 for Canizales. "I thought Canizales landed the better punches. It was a bad decision."

Television: ESPN2

Promoter: Peltz Boxing Promotions

(12-11-98)

Joe Santoliquito ■

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Floyd Mayweather

(Continued from page 21)

to talking about his son's opponents. He called Hernandez a "bum" and predicted that the fight with Manfredy would be a "walk in the park." When asked if Manfredy had any chance whatsoever of upsetting his son, Floyd Sr. said, "He'd have a better chance running through hell with gasoline on his drawers." But according to Top Rank matchmaker Ron Katz, Floyd Sr. has actually had a calming effect on his son.

"He made him cut out all that showboating crap," said Katz. "And did you notice how he entered the ring for the Manfredy fight? He just came down the aisle like an old-time fighter, no smoke or fancy costume. He was all business."

The same could not be said for Manfredy, who entered the sold-out, tent-like structure at the Miccosukee Indian Gaming compound with angel's wings sewn onto the waist band of his boxing trunks. He was accompanied by rapper Kid Rock, who shrieked his praises into a portable microphone. Instead of wearing his devil's mask, Manfredy carried the symbol of his alter ego in his left hand. And after ducking between the ropes, he threw the mask 10-rows deep into the crowd, a gesture, according to the fighter, signifying that he had cast out all the demons responsible for his dark side. He also said he'd had a dream in which God had given him the title belt. The trouble was, it was Mayweather in the other corner, not The Almighty, and Manfredy was about to get his wings clipped.

A precursor of what was to follow came early in the first round when Manfredy missed a left, and Mayweather countered with a quick, precise right. Although the punch jolted Manfredy and caught him by surprise, he wasn't really hurt and kept the pressure on the rest of the round, taking the fight to the champion as best he could. But it was like trying to corner one of the water moccasins that inhabit the swamp that surrounds the venue. And in the second round, Mayweather showed the capacity crowd and HBO viewers that his bite was even bigger than his father's bark.

The beginning of Manfredy's shockingly swift downfall came with less than a minute remaining in the second round, when another laser-like right caused his knees to buckle. Mayweather instantly leapt to the attack, knocking his rival into the ropes with a fusillade of combinations. Punch after punch rained down on Manfredy, and although some missed the mark, most were on target. At one point, Manfredy, 25-3-1 (20) with 1 no-contest, sagged against the ropes, and would have undoubtedly gone down without their support. Referee Frank Santore allowed the pummeling to continue for approximately 10 seconds, but after 28 unanswered punches, he called a halt at the 2:47 mark.

"The fight shouldn't have stopped," said an angry and emotional Manfredy. "That's bulls___. Hell, I wasn't hurt. That wasn't a championship fight. That's not boxing. That was politics. They knew what they wanted to do."

While Manfredy's disappointment was understandable, his conspiracy theory doesn't hold up. It was punches, not politics, that froze him on the ropes, and his dazed condition, not a Machiavellian plot, that prevented him from either punching back or clinching. Today, in a climate where the fighters' safety often overrides an aesthetically pleasing conclusion, not punching back under such circumstances is tantamount to surrender.

"My dad told me if I hurt Manfredy again, to go ahead and end it if I could," said Mayweather. "I saw my chance and I took it. I got him hurt, threw a lot of punches, and the fight was over."

While it could be argued that Santore should have allowed Manfredy a few more seconds to rebound before calling a halt, DiBella summed up the consensus of opinion when he said, "Floyd was so fast, he was going to stop Manfredy anyway."

With Manfredy so effortlessly disposed of, you have to wonder what challenges, if any, lie ahead for Mayweather. It's obvious that we're dealing with a very special fighter here, one with Hall of Fame potential. There were times in the Manfredy fight when his technique was so flawless it almost looked like he was making a how-to-box video. To see him glide gracefully around the ring (but never run), effortlessly avoid his opponent's punches, spin out of a corner, or deliver a seamless salvo is to watch a virtuoso at work.

"He's an unbelievably talented fighter," said Jim Lampley, HBO's blow-by-blow announcer. "His hands, his feet, his ability to roll his head, the way he finds creative punching angles. He's brilliant. He's so composed, and his confidence is clearly within himself, not outward show. At the end of the telecast, I asked Roy Jones if he could quarrel with Floyd comparing himself with Sugar Ray Robinson, Sugar Ray Leonard, and Roy Jones, and Roy said, 'No way.' Everything he does in the ring shows he has the talent to be on that level if he keeps his head together."

So what's next for this precociously talented young phenom? A unification with low-key IBF champ Roberto "Grandpa" Garcia is one possibility, but beyond that, there's nobody in the 130-pound division who seems to have even a remote chance of beating him. While a move up to full-fledged lightweight might sound attractive from a spectator's point of view, Mayweather, 19-0 (15), and his father insist that there's no reason to rush.

"I feel comfortable that he's gonna win at any weight he fights because of the skills I teach him," said Floyd Sr. "But right now, we're not trying to move nowhere. He's making 130 easy."

"There's plenty of guys at 130 pounds, but after what I saw tonight, it's going to be hard to find competitive fights for Floyd," admitted DiBella. "Manfredy was the toughest guy, and he blew him away! I think that down the line you're looking at Mayweather and Shane Mosley in a matchup between two of the best pound-for-pound fighters in the world."

Now there's a dream match for the millennium. But before we rush headlong into the future, let's pause for a moment and consider exactly what young Mr. Mayweather has wrought the past 12 months. Not only did he have a career-year in '98, he looked so good doing it, you can't help but get the feeling that Floyd Mayweather Jr. just might be the kind of fighter who makes a career out of having career-years. ■

James Page

(Continued from page 23)

way I was after that Lopez fight. I was sore and tired. But I'm back to living normal now."

There were still plenty of questions about Page going into the Lopez fight. True, he'd iced light-hitting Andrei Pestriaev to win the vacant title in October, but he'd never faced a powerpuncher like Lopez, and nobody was sure how his chin would hold up. He was definitely stunned by Lopez in the third and seemed in trouble again in the fourth, but quickly regrouped by returning to the pinpoint jab he used in the first two rounds. Although Lopez remained dangerous right up until the final bell, by the middle rounds Page had regained his composure and taken charge.

With the victory over Lopez, "The Mighty Quinn" gained instant credibility and name recognition. Trinidad, who, along with Page, is part of Don King's stable, was at ringside at the new Atlantic City Convention Center for the see-saw brawl, nodding his approval, as was everyone else among the 6,124 in attendance. Although Page was knocked down—technically speaking—twice, he landed enough of his own bombs to win a unanimous decision by scores of 116-111 from Debra Barnes (USA), 115-111 from Cesar Ramos (Puerto Rico), and 115-112 from Guillermo Perez (Panama).

"I know I helped myself," Page said. "I always had confidence in my ability. I don't think Trinidad, De La Hoya, or any of them can beat me. I think I'm a lot stronger than both of them. I'm a better puncher. Lopez thought he was tough until I hit him. Trinidad and De La Hoya could be better technical fighters, but they're not as tough as Lopez, and I don't know if they can take a punch like he did. I was a nobody before. The fight made me a somebody."

In some respects, Lopez was the perfect foil, an exciting slugger whose best defense was his hard head and jutted jaw. Page, who possesses a pulverizing left hook, a crackling right, a sharp, accurate jab, and good hand speed, salivated over the possibility of a quick, impressive victory for the Showtime viewing audience. But Lopez, with his stubborn skull and anvil-like fists, refused to cooperate.

After peppering Lopez in the first two rounds, Page suddenly appeared finished in the third. Pinned against the ropes, he was rocked by a Lopez right followed by a barrage of punches that had the defending champion leaning helplessly against the ropes before falling momentarily to a knee. Page was wobbly, but survived the round. It marked the first time in his career he'd ever been knocked down.

Page struggled again in the fourth, but gutted his way through. In the ninth, Perez called an apparent slip a knockdown, which scared Page into thinking he might lose. Spurred by that thought, he didn't lose a round after that, punishing Lopez right up until the final bell.

"The victory almost immediately validates Page as a player, a big player in the welterweight class," said Showtime boxing analyst Bobby Czyz. "When Lopez fought [Ike] Quartey, Lopez knocked him down twice. You don't need to say much more about Lopez than that. To fight Quartey to a draw means a lot. I had my doubts about Page's chin, but now I feel Page has been tested. I didn't have Page dominating by that much, but I had him ahead by a few points.

"The rumor buzzing around is that, pound-for-pound, Page might be the best puncher in the world. That might not be true, but he is a tremendous puncher, and he stayed busy. Page is not as tough as he is good, like I'm not as good as I am tough. I know one thing: De La Hoya won't go into the ring against the kid. He's too big a puncher. I still think De La Hoya lost to Pernell Whitaker, and he's hardly a puncher at all."

The fact that he was knocked down for

(Continued on page 74)

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James Page

(Continued from page 73)

the first time in his professional career continues to plague Page. Immediately after the fight, he seemed to be suffering from selective amnesia, asking people, "Did I get knocked down? I don't remember." His ego almost fooled him. It told him he was indestructible.

"It looked like I was more hurt than I really was," said Page. "I didn't get knocked down. In my mind, I've still never been knocked down in a fight. I will say it was good thing the ref gave me an eight-count in the third and gave me a break, because I was a little bit woozy. I know I can be hurt, but I'm just confident in my ability."

Page hit Lopez with so many crushing blows, Willie Rush, Page's trainer, said he could feel some of the shots himself. But according to Rush, his man threw too many bombs, leaving himself open for Lopez' counterpunches. Hopefully, Page learned a vital lesson against Lopez, and if he plans to compete with the division's elite, he'll have to learn that not everyone will succumb to his power.

Page received another quickie lesson in defense, as Rush constantly harped on him during the fight to sidestep Lopez when pulling away, instead of moving straight back and leaving himself open to Lopez' power. If it were Trinidad or De La Hoya, Page may not have had the chance to adjust.

"James was hard-headed during the fight," Rush said. "He has never been hit like that before in his life. If he listened to me, he wouldn't have had to take as much punishment as he did. In fact, James made that fight much harder than it should have been. He was against the ropes early and stayed there until he got hurt. That was a major no-no we worked on the whole time in preparing. James has one of the best jabs in the business, but he didn't use it as much as he could have. If he fights De La Hoya and Trinidad with that attitude, he better watch out. I believe James is willing now and ready to be trained."

Rush believes Page's defensive skills, particularly his ability to slip a punch, still needs work.

"I was satisfied with the way the fight went," Rush said. "But in James' mind, he can't get hurt. I liked how James fought because he got up and didn't give up. That showed me he's a champion. All he needs is a little polish now. I think he realizes that anyone with two hands and a pair of gloves on can hurt you."

Not too many fighters can withstand the power of Lopez, who De La Hoya had said was the most dangerous opponent out there for him. What that means for Page is anyone's guess, as is exactly where he fits in the grand scheme of the most talent-laden division in boxing. He may not be as technically sound as either Trinidad or De La Hoya. He lacks Trinidad's quickness and De La Hoya's array of punches, but his speed, power, and fierce left hook have to be respected. Page has already impressed at least one of the two.

"I think Page is a great boxer," said Trinidad, the IBF welterweight champion. "He's very fast and a very good puncher. I was most impressed with his physical conditioning, but he has a tendency to lower his hands. He has a very low defense."

Bob Goodman, director of boxing for Don King Productions, said he wouldn't mind a unification bout between King's two welterweight champions. Goodman also implied that he may have a lot more trouble finding fights for Page now that everyone saw what he's capable of. After all, no one really knew just how good Page was until the Lopez fight. Of course, like everybody else in the 147-pound division, "The Golden Boy" is the real target Goodman and King would love to see Page testing his punch and skills against.

"We'll see if Mr. De La Hoya can crawl out from under his rock now," Goodman said. "We don't mind a unification between our own guys, since they're the only ones who want to fight. 'Tito' is very anxious to see if he can unify. De La Hoya has been fighting an array of old men; these guys bring their canes into the ring with them.

"Obviously, those of us who know James Page know he has a lot of ability. I don't know if there is another welterweight in the world who could take the bombs Page was throwing. De La Hoya, if he wants to be recognized as the best fighter in the world, is going to have to fight better people than he has. In Quartey, he has a viable contender. But Quartey's been ready for a while, and De La Hoya keeps getting these injuries. I don't know if that fight will ever happen."

Throughout the Lopez fight, Page blinked his eyes. It was something noted by the Showtime broadcast team and press row. Some thought it was caused by medication, others speculated that Page may have had something in his eye. Actually, Page has a nervous condition that causes him to blink uncontrollably (His friends used to call him "Blinky" growing up). The more tense he gets, the more he blinks. But after the way he handled Lopez, it will probably be the rest of the welterweight division getting uptight at the thought of facing The Mighty Quinn. ■

Fernando Vargas

(Continued from page 26)

in the fight game, and by beating Campas, Vargas took his first major step. He went from a potential champion to a recognized champion, from seemingly capable to officially world class. But the next leap may be more challenging: going from champion to superstar, as his promoter predicted he will. To do that, Vargas will have to continue to fend off challengers, begin to unify the junior middleweight title (he says that's his next goal), and eventually start beating fighters considered superior to Campas—fighters like De La Hoya.

"I don't think people can compare me to Oscar De La Hoya no more," Vargas, 15-0 (15), offered after the title win. "I think I did something too extravagant for Oscar De La Hoya's like; I don't think he ever stepped up to that kind of opposition with 15 fights."

It was actually in De La Hoya's 17th fight, after being a pro for almost a year longer than Vargas had been when he fought Campas, that "The Golden Boy" met his first championship-caliber opponent, John-John Molina. Though De La Hoya was impressive against the Puerto Rican veteran, he couldn't finish his man, and had to settle for a unanimous decision. One of De La Hoya's current trainers, Gil Clancy, was ringside for the Vargas-

Campas fight and, for slightly different reasons than Vargas, doesn't like to draw comparisons between the two Olympians from California.

"Oscar is a different type of fighter at a different stage of his career," Clancy said. "Fernando doesn't get you out with one punch like Oscar can. He's shown power vs. the opposition he's fought, but all those knockouts are a little deceiving. He's not the powerpuncher Oscar is. Fernando's more of a technical fighter.

"I was very, very impressed with Vargas, he was very well-schooled against Campas. He surprised me with his performance. He showed unmatchable movement, and he never lost his cool. And when Campas started to get through, he responded. Still, he's got a long way to go before you can call him great."

Another Hall of Fame trainer, Emanuel Steward, was even more impressed by Vargas' performance than Clancy was. It's important to bear in mind that Steward, as a former trainer of De La Hoya, may have an axe to grind, but his praise for "Ferocious Fernando" is still noteworthy.

"There's a lot of tension for a young fighter going for his first world championship belt," Steward said. "He showed no fear and he didn't get tired. The best is yet to come from Fernando. He's going to become a great champion. And I'll tell you this: If he fights Oscar De La Hoya, he beats Oscar De La Hoya."

Another supreme talent Vargas will probably have to go through if he hopes to be called great is fellow junior middleweight David Reid, his Olympic teammate and the only member of the '96 U.S. team to win a gold medal. Like a fight with De La Hoya, a matchup with "The American Dream" would be unlikely to materialize before the year 2000, but that's fine with Vargas, who prefers to face Reid when the money is just right.

"David Reid is a great friend of mine," Vargas said, "but I think by beating Campas I built myself a lot more than he has. I think he needs to get some more fights so people can talk more about him, and they'll talk more about me, and people are going to demand the fight. I have respect for David dearly, and he's one of the guys from the Olympic team I really like, but if we do fight, it's just business. I don't have nothing against David Reid, I think he's a swell guy."

Most people in the boxing community are of the opinion that Vargas has the talent to one day be great, but we'll just have to wait for showdowns with the likes of De La Hoya and Reid before we know just how far Vargas can go. Becoming a true superstar, though, is about more than just what you achieve in the ring. It's how you conduct yourself, whether you have the personality to make the public respond, and whether you possess that undefinable appeal that made Mike Tyson more of a sensation than Larry Holmes, that made Sugar Ray Leonard more popular than Marvin Hagler.

In these regards, Vargas seems to have a lot going for him. Though he doesn't draw thousands of screaming young women to his fights, he does have the good looks to have started attracting a female fan base. His hairstyle, though perhaps a bit radical for old-school fans, makes him instantly identifiable. And beyond the surface lies the kind of engaging personality that should take him far. Just one glimpse of Vargas with his two-year-old son, Fernando Jr. (whom everyone calls "Papas," which is Spanish for "Little Daddy"), and you're hooked. When Vargas stepped up to the podium at the postfight press conference, he brought his boy with him, and Papas charmed the crowd by singing "Happy Birthday" to his adoring father who had turned 21 just five days before the fight.

Vargas' soft side also was revealed by a favor he arranged for a young neighborhood friend with cerebral palsy, Joey Quayle. When Quayle first heard the date of the Campas fight, he called Vargas and told him that the fight fell on his birthday.

"I was like, 'Well all right, Joey, if it's your birthday, then we're gonna have to do something to get you out there.' He was very jazzed," Vargas said. "I know that he really was happy, and I think that's all that counts. You know, when you can touch somebody's life like that, it's something special to me, and I know it made him feel real good, too."

Much of the bad press Vargas has gotten has been the result of misunderstandings. In late-'97, Vargas was cited for reckless driving, which dragged his name down because it happened around the

(Continued on page 76)

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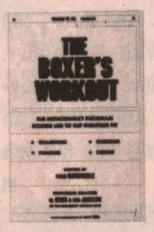

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Fernando Vargas

(Continued from page 75)

same time that negative statements he made about De La Hoya were circulating through the press. According to Vargas, nobody ever actually witnessed the supposed reckless driving and there was no basis for the allegations. The charges were dropped soon after, but the negative press was already out there.

Another publicized incident occurred around the same time when Carlos Martinez, a fighter Vargas grew up with who was no longer a part of Eduardo Garcia's stable, came by the gym and harassed Vargas into fighting him. Vargas insists he controlled his somewhat infamous temper as long as he could, but eventually gave in, and had to deal with more negative reports for engaging in the spur-of-the-moment brawl. But to Vargas, the negative attention that comes with the beginnings of celebrity is well worth it.

"I just went out to do some Christmas shopping, and I was mobbed, and it's great," Vargas said a couple days after returning home to Oxnard from Atlantic City. "It's a great feeling, everything came out the way I wanted it to. And now I can have a great Christmas with my family. Christmas is my favorite time of year anyway. It's a warm feeling. And now I can have an even warmer feeling with my belt around my waist." ■

Luisito Espinosa

(Continued from page 29)

his handlers for being fooled into thinking they were going against a boxer—and perhaps a rather frail, overripe one at that—rather than a two-fisted slugger. Against Ramirez, Espinosa boxed and countered and snaked around the ring and looked a hell of a lot more like Saoul Mamby than Thomas Hearns. But as soon as Espinosa's first good right connected, McKinney got the look that guys get when they've made the terrible discovery that they're in with a guy they can't possibly beat. It was nothing like the look he wore when he and Marco Antonio Barrera took one another to hell and back in February '96, or, for that matter, when he weathered Jones' best bombs last year before deflating him in the fourth.

The fight fans who had come to Indio, California, to see the Kostya Tszyu-Diobelys Hurtado main event, but lucked into Espinosa-McKinney on the undercard, hadn't even settled into their seats when a thudding right followed by a hook hurt McKinney, 33-4-1 (19), and sent him retreating, hastily and rubber-legged, to the ropes. Espinosa pounded him there for a spell the way a seasoned, professional fighter does. Then he backed off, surveyed his opponent smartly, and let him walk dead into a right-hand, left-hook combination that floored him.

Espinosa, 44-7 (23), didn't let up in the second, and when a huge overhand right drove McKinney to the ropes, the champion assailed him there with those awkward, sometimes looping, sometimes straight, but always on-target blows that he throws when he's got his man. He bombed away relentlessly until McKinney, bloody, battered, and barely conscious, fairly melted onto the canvas and into the waiting arms of referee Marty Denkin, whose stoppage at 0:47 was both merciful and well-timed.

Some thought, as McKinney offered later, that the climb in weight (from 122 to 126 pounds) was a big deal after all. Others thought it was just McKinney's time to get old. There may be pieces of truth in both, but the primary reason McKinney got the look that he did and the beating that he did was that Espinosa wasn't supposed to be a big hitter, especially not with the right hand. But he was, at least on this night, and that took McKinney completely by surprise.

"On the tape I watched, he didn't throw a right at all," said a surprised McKinney.

And Espinosa wasn't supposed to go after him; he was supposed to box, like he did against Ramirez. The Espinosa who McKinney had signed to fight was not the one who had shown up. The ink had dried, and by the time the first bell rang, the chameleon knew what he would do.

"I studied McKinney's style very closely and knew his right was strong," Espinosa said through his wife, Mariecherie, who often serves as his interpreter. "I knew I should initiate because he always has the same style and I can change mine. I knew I was much stronger."

Most fighters would prefer to always be the bigger, harder-hitting man as Espinosa was against McKinney, but to the true chameleon, it makes no difference. He lives by the old adage that you've heard before, but that so few can practice: "Whether I slug or box depends on the opponent. If he is a fighter, I will box. If he is a boxer, I will fight."

The champion talks about his versatility casually, as if it is a part of the game that every pug has mastered. But then, when one has fought on as many lands as Espinosa has, and in as many time zones, and has been written off more than once and forced to fight on the other side of the globe, far from his homeland and family, then one can be expected to be offhand about matters as trivial and mundane as those that take place inside a gymnasium or a ring.

Espinosa's history reveals as much about the fighter and the man as does his ability to box one night and bang the next. You can almost see it in the way he moves and steps in the ring, the way a man does who has seen everything before and who knows what he can do and what he can't, and accepts it. His is the gait and the posture of a flawed but wise professional veteran fighter who is well-traveled in more ways than one. He has experienced immense success and terrible rejection, and uses both to guide him in and out of the ring.

In the early days, Espinosa learned the trade by fighting in his homeland, the Philippines, and occasionally in Mexico and Honolulu. He lost five fights in his first five years as a pro before he struck it big in '89 when he destroyed the feared Thai bomber Kaokar Galaxy to win the WBA bantamweight title. If there was a bigger Philippine hero in the prior 20 years, no one had heard of him. Espinosa was the toast of the land as long as he kept winning, which he stopped doing in his third title defense when Israel Contreras stopped him in five. He won six fights in a row before being stopped again, this time by Alejandro Gonzalez, and if his supporters were passionate in their embrace of

him early, then they were equally as passionate about their rejection of him then.

"In the Philippines, they look down on you when you are defeated. They forget the victories, and only think of you as a loser," said Espinosa.

Espinosa spent most of the next two years quietly fighting and living in Tokyo, far away from the scrutiny and derision of his countrymen. During that time he rededicated himself to the game, and in '95 captured the WBC title with a decision win over current IBF champ Manuel Medina. A knockout victory over arch-rival Gonzalez followed, and Espinosa received a hero's welcome back in Manila. Soon he was once again an icon in his homeland, and it appeared that the rest of the world would never get to see the man who was defending the title in front of 300,000 deliriously supportive fans. We'd hear about him and how he was turning back one capable contender after another—Cesar Soto, Nobutoshi Hiranaka, Medina, Carlos Rios, to name a few—but with such a following in the Philippines, why go anywhere else?

Then the economy in the Philippines collapsed, and he moved again. Espinosa signed with the Denver-based promotional group America Presents last April and he and his family, at least for now, live in a suburb of San Francisco. It shouldn't surprise you to know that he has adapted well.

"Here it's 80 percent Filipino where we live, and they are very happy he's here," said Mariecherie. "The Filipinos in California recognize Luisito as a hero representing the Philippines."

That's not to say, however, that the champion doesn't long for his homeland.

"I'd like to have all my fights in the Philippines, but they can't afford it," he lamented. "It hurts, but I understand it. I'm already known in the Asian countries, but now I want to prove my talent more in America."

That may be difficult at first. Espinosa is the type of quiet, dignified sort you won't see crashing postfight press conferences calling out Hamed. He doesn't sport all manner of tattoos or live a wild night life, and his trainer isn't writing a book about him. He's not at war with any promoters. In America, such an act is normally a tough sell, and this is no different. Remember, there are lots of featherweights and junior feathers out there with a lot more visibility and a lot more charisma, and even if they're not better fighters, marketing gurus tell us it's the style that sells and not the substance, at least initially. But Espinosa is a fighter who cannot rely on gimmicks. He must keep winning, and the versatility that is the hallmark of his game should continue to stand him in good stead.

"At this level, it's about being able to cope with different styles," said trainer and ESPN2 boxing analyst Teddy Atlas. "When you're versatile, you can have longevity and consistency, and that's how you grade some guys. Some guys are really good fighters, but can't adapt. Pipino Cuevas was a real strong, good fighter, but didn't have the versatility to match another guy who was better at what he did. If you have the ability to do certain things, then you can stay on top. Espinosa so far has shown that. His instinct is good, too. He knew against McKinney to change his gears and to go to fast forward and go after the guy."

Like everyone else between 122 and 130 pounds, Espinosa would like to meet Hamed. Not because he dislikes him or finds his act objectionable, but because this is a business and Hamed is where the money is. Also, when you have been through in your life and your career all that Espinosa has, the kind of paycheck a match with Hamed would bring would soothe a lot of bad memories.

"I'd love to fight Hamed," said Espinosa. "He's unorthodox, so I'd have to study his style a lot beforehand and decide what I would do."

In the meantime, Espinosa will study styles and fight his fights. As we went to press, he was scheduled to meet Cesar Soto again on the undercard of the January 16 Mike Tyson-Francois Botha fight in Las Vegas. The glitter of the Vegas strip and the Hollywood-type atmosphere surrounding that event promises to be vastly different from anything Espinosa has seen before, even wilder than the huge crowds in Manila. Don't worry about all the hoopla getting to him, though. Something tells us he'll adapt. ■

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Robinson-Gatti II

(Continued from page 33)

impressed HBO enough for the cable network to bring him back against Gatti.

"I think Ivan gives anyone in the lightweight division a fight, including Shane Mosley," said DiBella. "He said he wants to fight Mosley. That's another good sign."

According to DiBella, there are a lot of other lightweights who don't feel the same way. "Israel Cardona turned Mosley down again," he said, "and Stevie Johnston wants another shot at Bazan."

But even if Cardona and Johnston weren't reluctant to try their luck against the multitalented Mosley, Robinson, thanks to his two epics battles with Gatti, is a much more attractive challenger. He also has the stubborn confidence of an outsider, who, having proven his doubters wrong once, feels sure he can do it again.

"I've got all the ability and heart in the world to fight anybody they put me in there with," Robinson proclaimed. "I do get into brawls, but I believe there's no one out there in the lightweight division who can beat me, not Shane Mosley, not Angel Manfredy, not Cardona [who stopped an allegedly ill-prepared Robinson in July '97]."

Mosley and Robinson go back a long way together, and according to Mosley, they sparred together eight or 10 times during their amateur days. And while Mosley welcomes a fight between Robinson and himself, and said that it would be a "wonderful" fight for HBO's viewers, he has no doubt about who would emerge with the IBF belt around his waist.

"He called me out a bit on HBO after the second Gatti fight," said Mosley with a chuckle. "Ivan did a good job in that fight, but he can't beat me. The only thing he might do is try to move a bit. But he's not fast enough to outbox me, and eventually he'll want to go punch-for-punch. But Ivan gets in trouble when he slugs. It's his downfall."

Maybe. But a lot of so-called experts thought the same thing before Robinson's first fight with Gatti. And with everybody else in the lightweight division falling all over themselves in an attempt to avoid fighting Mosley, it's refreshing to find a challenger eager to prove the critics wrong once again. ■

Carlos Ortiz

(Continued from page 37)

siastically, he articulates how he immediately became invigorated to some higher emotional perception.

"It hypnotized me. It was instant attraction, and the magic of it, to this day, has not worn off," he related. "I fell in love with the smell, the sound, everything I could see in that place. It was true love. When boy meets girl—that was boxing and me. The trainer, Archie Martella, came over to me while I was watching this kid punch the bag and said, 'What are you doing here? Do you want to join?' I had no sneakers to be in the gym. 'If you come next Wednesday, you can join,' he said. I said, 'All right.'

"I didn't tell my family. All they were interested in was that I was home early, by about 10 o'clock. It wasn't until I started going out of town to tournaments that I told my mother, Ernestina, and she didn't mind because she knew I was in good company. It helped, too, that I was winning.

"For me it was like winning the lottery. My mother got so excited every time I brought home a trophy because it meant I brought food home, too. It was like a party, and every two weeks or so we would look forward to it. On turning pro, I started realizing that I could mean something to people, that I could make my own history, that I could represent my people from Puerto Rico in a good light. I wanted to accomplish something, to be recognized worldwide, to be somebody. And, thank God, I can look back on my life and say, well, I tried to make a difference."

The impact he made in his profession was recognized in 1991 when Carlos, who compiled an overall pro record of 61-7-1 (30) with 1 no-contest, was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York. In a moving oration, he summed up his feelings by declaring, "If you hear thunder, don't worry, it's just my heart beating." The annual pilgrimage he and his pleasant wife, Maria, make to the Hall of Fame is the highlight of their year.

Ortiz retains such an enviable level of vitality—witnessed on the dance floors of London during his most recent visit—that Maria worries sometimes that he exerts himself too much. Her concern is not without foundation. Earlier this year, Carlos, while in one of the New York gyms he still visits regularly to assist young up-and-comers, felt a pain in his head that would eventually be diagnosed as a subdural hematoma, which required immediate surgery. It was not until he collapsed a couple of days later that he realized the extent of the injury.

"I was unwell for a time, but, thank God, I feel much better now and have suffered no ill effects as a result," he said cheerfully.

For a number of years, he and Maria ran a successful distribution business that dealt principally with the transportation of sports equipment and merchandise for a fairly extensive clientele base. Ortiz lives comfortably in a cozy apartment in the Bronx and enjoys travelling throughout the world, Paris being the planned destination early in the New Year. But the lure of places like Gleason's Gym remains overwhelming.

"I still like going to the gyms," he concluded. "Boxing has meant so much to me. It's difficult to get it out of your system, not that I'd ever want to do that. Nothing is like winning the championship. It was my epic moment. To this day I am thrilled about it. I can still taste it on my lips."

He smiled, the smile of a man who has come through his personal ordeal, who can no longer recall when he last sought comfort from the bottle, who spends his days in retirement exactly how he wants, who stood up to be counted and proved he is a man—skilled, ambitious, accomplished, God-fearing, flawed, vulnerable, and glorious. ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING'S European correspondent and a regular contributor to this magazine.

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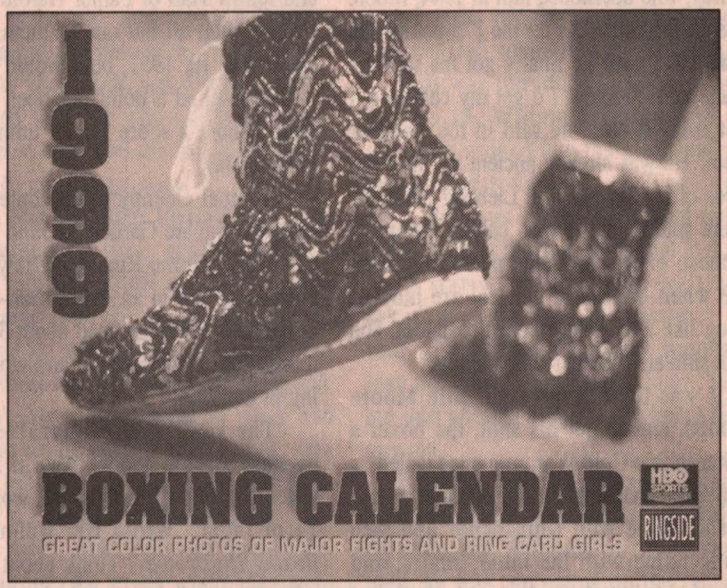

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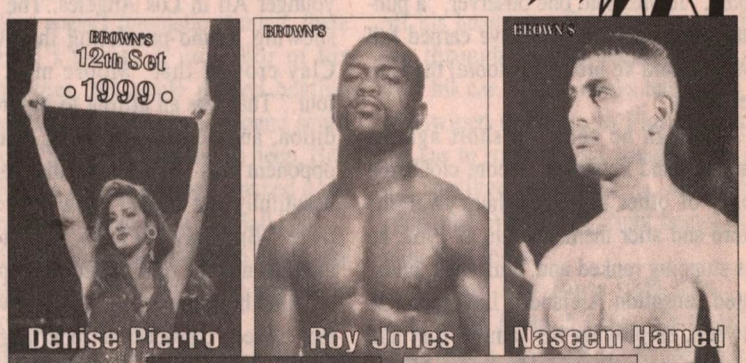

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Archie Moore

(Continued from page 41)

Charles did it three times in the '40s. Moore said that the best he ever fought was Charley Burley, who decisioned him in 1944. Moore was the top contender for the 175-pound title from 1946 until he finally got his shot six years later. "I knew I'd get my chance if I just stuck it out," he said in the dressing room. He was already ancient by the standards of his era, but A.J. Liebling put a different spin on the matter, calling Moore "a virtuoso of anachronistic perfection in an age when boxers in general are hurried along like artificially ripened tomatoes, and with similarly unsatisfactory results."

It was the heavyweight title Moore wanted, and to get his shot, the boxer a writer in that Cold War time once called "a con man capable of sitting down at a conference table with Khrushchev and then going home with the table, chairs, and Khrushchev" embarked on an unheard-of crusade. Writing up to 150 letters and postcards daily, Moore inundated sports departments in newspapers around the country with his pleas for a Marciano bout. Editors got "Wanted" posters with Rocky's face on them, offering a reward for the "capture and delivery of Marciano to any ring in the world for the purpose of defending his heavyweight championship against the logical contender, Archie Moore." It was, said one observer, "a publicity campaign which to have earned full justice should've brought [Moore] the U.S. Presidency."

Although he came up short against Marciano and Patterson, Moore clobbered plenty of other top-flight heavyweights before and after them. As late as 1962, he was stopping ranked and, until then, undefeated sensation Alejandro Lavorante. In between, employing his famous diet and his even more dependable guile, Moore kept his 175-pound title out of the reach of boxers who had been in diapers when he was starting out in the ring.

"You really made the old man reach down in his bag of tricks tonight," Moore told top-ranked Tony Anthony after knocking him out on September 20, 1957.

While the experience wasn't exactly painless, it was almost impossible not to learn something in the ring with The Mongoose. "Archie is so smart, he exercises your brain as well as your body," enthused Frankie Daniels en route to a sparring session with Moore during preparation for the fourth of his five contests with future light heavyweight champion and fellow Hall of Famer Harold Johnson. (Moore won all but one of them, and that December 10, 1951, bout would've ended up a draw had a point not been deducted from Moore's score for an unintentional low punch.)

His final championship contest was at Madison Square Garden on June 10, 1961. Challenger Guilio Rinaldi of Italy had outpointed Moore in an earlier non-title fight in Rome, but Moore shed about 30 pounds to make the division limit and won a unanimous decision.

"The fight was memorable simply because Archie Moore was in it and he lasted the full 15 rounds and won at least 11 of them," wrote Hal Hennessey in *Boxing Illustrated*. "Think about this fantastic human being, nearly half a century old, trading punches with a young bullock for 45 minutes in a temperature of 90 degrees." Only slightly less impressed was THE RING's Nat Loubet: "Moore won, and by a fairly convincing margin, but he fought mainly from memory—and a guy can forget a lot of things when he's been around as long as Archie."

Moore was the sixth-ranked heavyweight when he met the three-decades younger Ali in Los Angeles. The poetry-spewing, round-predicting then-Cassius Clay crowed that "Moore must fall in four." That was an affront to Moore's erudition, and he said his brash, obnoxious opponent was "like a man that can write beautifully, but doesn't know how to punctuate." But Clay/Ali knew what to do in the ring, and the fight ended as prophesied.

After his retirement—which, it was written, caused "considerable mourning among all civilized people who respect urbanity, good prose, and a well-executed left hook"—Moore started his own youth foundation in San Diego, and imparted his boxing secrets to a select few proteges. One of them was George Foreman, who won the heavyweight title in 1973 and 1995.

Moore was in Foreman's corner when Big George was knocked out by Ali in 1974, and his explanation to writer George Plimpton for what happened in that epic fight was, typically, both a literary and analytical masterpiece: "Ali swayed so far back on the ropes that it was like he was sitting in an old convertible Cadillac. The '54 model. Now, George tried to enter from the side doors. But they were shut. So George began to bang at them, hitting at Ali's arms that had the elbows protecting his hips, on up to the gloves protecting the lower mandible. On occasion, George struck Ali some tremendous blows on the upper cranium, causing Ali no little discomfiture. But Ali weathered that, and he cunningly convinced George that he could not punch, and other nonsensical things, until George began to behave like he actually believed it, until this tremendous puncher lost his power from punching at that Cadillac's doors and he turned from an atomic force into a firecracker. In short, as they say in the idiom of Brooklyn, he blew his cool."

A personal note: I had the matchless opportunity to, in Moore's words, "take tea" with him several years ago, after he agreed to speak at a sports dinner in Cincinnati I helped arrange. ("I am an experienced speaker," he had replied to the invitation, "and one who can charm, disarm, and entertain and cause people to feel refreshed." Which is what he did.) We sat in a hotel restaurant at a table whose surface was soon splashed with the tears that fell from his eyes as Moore, who'd been victimized by racial discrimination time after time throughout his own career, talked about what his friend Jackie Robinson had endured as the first black baseball player to make it to the major leagues.

Topping his impeccable wardrobe that day was a white woolen cap decorated in front with three small pins. Two were likenesses of Moore's heroes, Robinson and Martin Luther King. "And this," he said, pointing to the pin in the middle, "is me." But in fact it was Bugs Bunny, a cartoon character equally renowned but never truly as wily as the character under the hat, whose career and life charmed, disarmed, entertained, and caused boxing to feel refreshed. ■

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New Face

(Continued from page 26)

peck away at before finally dropping him in the 10th round. Hall learned from the experience and vowed he'd never take another opponent as lightly as he did Gannon.

His most recent victory was a third-round knockout of Anthony Bigeni at the Atlantic City Convention Center on December 5. In that fight, Hall exhibited an ability to drop his right in over his opponent's guard and go hard to the body. He's surprisingly elusive for someone his size, able to roll under punches as well as use his considerable reach and steady jab as defensive barriers.

"You can give a lot of fighters a lot of things," said Hall's trainer, Aaron Snowell, who also trains IBF bantamweight champion Tim Austin. "You can improve their conditioning and their style, and spark up their defense. What you can't give them is heart, and that's what Richard has a lot of, heart. He's tall and he has a long reach; he can fight on the outside, and now he's able to fight on the inside, which makes him an all-around fighter. He doesn't mind sparring anyone, including heavyweights. But the one thing I'd have to say about Richard is that he's not afraid of anything."

It's ironic now, because Hall spent most of his early years scared of something. In a way, he still fights his demons. They're there when he goes to bed, and are present when he's in the ring. The shadows from his past take on many shapes: He was parted from his mother for two months when he was a year old. There were the times, he says, when his uncle would beat him, and if he wasn't able to catch young Richard, he'd throw stones at him. Hall also feels fortunate to have survived two near-fatal car accidents. So it's safe to say the fighter is well-versed in life's survival tactics.

It's also why Hall feels so at ease in the ring. He gets to strike back at his demons, and his often stormy upbringing is the foundation of his confidence. And much of that is derived from his grandmother.

"When I was growing up, people would tell me I wouldn't be anybody and I wouldn't go nowhere," Hall said. "They told me I wouldn't reach 20. That made me more stronger. My grandmother always told me to believe in God. I used to be out there. I was in the street when I was 12 years old, and my grandmother got after me and put me in the house. Oh yeah, she was tough, real rough. I always wondered why she was so tough on me, why she wouldn't let me free to do what I wanted to do. I know now."

Hall and his older brother, Marquis, were raised by their grandmother in Rejoin, Jamaica, a little town just outside of Montego Bay. He was born, however, in Kingston, where his life was thrown into turmoil when he was just a year old. One day his mother went to work and left them in the care of their father, who packed his bags and abandoned the boys after an argument with their mother.

The boys, ages one and two, wandered out into the street, where they were found by a police officer, who turned them over to an adoption agency. Hall's mother had assumed their father took her boys away. A few months later, Hall's mother found their pictures in the newspaper and immediately claimed them. Realizing she was unable to raise her children alone, Hall's mother called his grandmother to see if she could take the boys. Hall didn't see his mother again for nine years.

If that wasn't traumatic enough, there was Hall's uncle. A neighbor of his grandmother, the uncle started beating Hall regularly when he was around seven years old. The animosity ran so deep, Hall recalled, his uncle purposely soaked a rag in saltwater to clean out a cut Hall had.

"That really happened, you could say the man hated me so much, he put salt in my wounds," Hall said.

Things came to an abrupt halt when Hall reached his middle teens. Tired and angry about the constant abuse, Hall retaliated by stabbing his uncle with a knife after another attack. Hall was cleared of all charges two years later, thanks to the testimony of his grandmother. In an eerie twist of fate, Hall says his uncle is now his biggest fan.

"I had to leave then," Hall said. "I had to get out. That's when a cousin of mine brought me to the gym. I still see my demons. I see my uncle every time I go to my bed. Everyone has a demon in their lives, and he was my demon. I'm just starting to learn to control my temper better now. I'm a man now with a little daughter, Bria, who I love dearly. Every step I make it's for her. I don't live for Richard Hall anymore; I live for Bria."

Hall was introduced to boxing when he was 18. Without ever putting on a glove, he walked into the place and challenged the toughest guy. Two weeks later, Hall was entered in a local tournament. He reached the finals, but lost.

"I started crying, and my trainer asked me what was the matter," Hall said. "I told him, 'I wasn't suppose to lose no fight.' Two weeks later, he got me into another fight, and I knocked the guy out."

Hall was a natural. Boxing became a pleasant distraction. He began chalking up wins and tournament titles. Before long, he was competing on the Jamaican national amateur circuit. In 1992 and again in '93, he won the Jamaican amateur light heavyweight championship and in '92 lost a close decision to eventual United States Olympian and current light heavyweight contender Antonio Tarver.

He's started well as a pro, but that, too, was almost sidetracked by misfortune. After the loss to Gannon, Hall was involved in two car accidents separated by a couple of weeks. One nearly took off his head, as a fire engine came bolting through an intersection and drove over his car. A few weeks later, Hall was sideswiped on a trip to Florida, causing the car to roll over six times. Now, having survived those ordeals, he wants to challenge WBA/WBC light heavy champion Roy Jones.

"I want Roy Jones right now," Hall said. "Roy Jones is great, but there's no man that's invincible. At one time, I thought I couldn't be beaten, and I got beat. I would give Roy Jones problems, and I'm not afraid of anybody. I know I have what it takes to take his confidence away. People might think I'm crazy, but I think I can beat Roy Jones."

It wouldn't be the first time Hall's been called crazy. ■

WORLDWIDE RATINGS

The ratings of the three major governing bodies recognized by The Ring are supplied by the organizations themselves. They are updated on these pages as soon as they are made available to us. In this issue, the WBA ratings were compiled as of October 1998, the WBC as of November 1998, and the IBF as of December 1998.

HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Lennox Lewis (GB)	C	–	–
Evander Holyfield (USA)	–	C	C
John Ruiz (USA)	1	2	4
Zeljko Mavrovic (CROA)	2	8	–
Ray Mercer (USA)	3	7	7
David Tua (NZ)	4	–	10
Wladimir Klitchko (UKR)	5	–	–
Michael Grant (USA)	6	6	–
Andrew Golota (POL)	7	–	–
Vitali Klitchko (UKR)	8	–	–
Larry Donald (USA)	9	12	5
Axel Schulz (GER)	10	–	–
Henry Akinwande (GB)	–	1	8
Jade Scott (USA)	22	3	–
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	–	4	12
Mike Tyson (USA)	–	5	–
Oleg Maskaev (UKR)	20	9	–
Michael Moorer (USA)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Francois Botha (SA)	21	–	2
Hasim Rahman (USA)	24	–	3
Vaughn Bean (USA)	–	11	6
Chris Byrd (USA)	12	–	9

CRUISERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Juan Carlos Gomez (CUBA)	C	–	–
Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)	–	C	–
Arthur Williams (USA)	–	–	C
Marcelo Dominguez (ARG)	1	–	9
Dale Brown (CAN)	2	10	–
Johnny Nelson (GB)	3	–	–
Darren Corbett (IRE)	4	3	–
Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)	5	9	8
Ken Murphy (USA)	6	5	4
Stefan Anghern (SWI)	7	–	–
Saul Montana (MEX)	8	2	–
Alexei Ilin (RUS)	9	–	–
George Ariss (BRA)	10	–	–
Ezequiel Paixao (BRA)	–	1	–
Robert Daniels (USA)	17	4	–
Nate Miller (USA)	–	6	–
Stefan Anghern (SWI)	–	7	–
Valery Vikhor (LAT)	21	8	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Stefan Anghern (SWI)	–	–	3
Imamu Mayfield (USA)	–	11	5
Terry Dunstan (GB)	–	–	6
Ramon Garbey (CUB)	13	–	7
Andre Purlette (GUY)	18	–	10

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Roy Jones (USA)	C	C	–
Reggie Johnson (USA)	–	–	C
Richard Frazier (USA)	1	3	6
Montell Griffin (USA)	2	8	–
Derrick Harmon (USA)	3	11	11
Michael Nunn (USA)	4	–	–
Crawford Ashley (GB)	5	4	2
Henry Wharton (GB)	6	–	–
Lou Del Valle (USA)	7	6	5
Hisashi Teraji (JAP)	8	–	–
Jorge Castro (ARG)	9	–	–
Otis Grant (USA)	10	–	–
Dario Matteoni (ARG)	26	1	–
Richard Hall (USA)	22	2	4
Virgil Hill (USA)	–	5	–
Anthony Bigeni (AUS)	–	7	–
David Telesco (USA)	13	9	7
Fabian Chancelay (ARG)	11	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Will Taylor (USA)	19	–	3
Antonio Tarver (USA)	23	–	8
Mark Prince (GB)	–	–	9
Muhammad Siluvangi (ZAI)	12	–	10

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Richie Woodhall (GB)	C	–	–
Frank Liles (USA)	–	C	–
Sven Ottke (GER)	–	–	C
Vincenzo Nardiello (ITA)	1	–	11
Glenn Catley (GB)	2	–	–
Eric Lucas (CAN)	3	5	–
Dean Francis (GB)	4	–	–
Thomas Tate (USA)	5	3	1
Robin Reid (GB)	6	12	10
Zafarou Ballogou (TOGO)	7	10	4
Bruno Girard (FRA)	8	1	–
David Starie (GB)	9	8	7
Chris Johnson (CAN)	10	11	–
Byron Mitchell (USA)	12	2	3
Jorge Castro (ARG)	–	4	–
Herol Graham (GB)	–	6	–
Mads Larsen (DEN)	16	7	–
Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)	–	9	8
Charles Brewer (USA)	–	–	2
Rick Thornberry (AUST)	27	–	5
Antoine Byrd (USA)	–	–	6
Dean Francis (GB)	–	–	9

MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Hassine Cherifi (FRA)	C	–	–
William Joppy (USA)	–	C	–
Bernard Hopkins (USA)	–	–	C
Stephane Ouelette (CAN)	1	9	–
Robert McCracken (GB)	2	7	3
Antwun Echols (USA)	3	–	–
Winky Wright (USA)	4	5	–
Keith Holmes (USA)	5	4	6
Kevin Palmer (USA)	6	–	–
Bert Schenk (GER)	7	–	–
Julio Cesar Vazquez (ARG)	8	–	–
Giovanni Pretorius (SA)	9	8	4
Ali Ennebati (FRA)	10	12	–
Darren Obah (AUSTRL)	–	1	–
Julio Cesar Green (DR)	12	2	7
Antwun Echols (USA)	–	3	–
Rito Ruvalcaba (MEX)	22	6	–
Agostino Cardamone (ITA)	–	10	8
Robert Allen (USA)	–	–	1
Antwun Echols (USA)	–	–	2
Anthony Andrews (GUY)	27	–	5
Peter Venancio (BRA)	–	–	9
Brian Barbosa (USA)	25	–	10

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Keith Mullings (USA)	C	–	–
Laurent Boudouani (FRA)	–	C	–
Fernando Vargas (USA)	–	–	C
Javier Castillejo (SPA)	1	7	9
Tony Marshall (USA)	2	3	–
David Reid (USA)	3	6	6
Davide Ciarlante (ITA)	4	–	–
Kookyui Song (KOR)	5	–	–
Said Bennajem (FRA)	6	–	–
Mamadou Thiam (FRA)	7	4	–
Raul Marquez (USA)	8	–	4
James Coker (USA)	9	–	–
Kevin Kelly (USA)	10	2	–
Guillermo Jones (PAN)	–	1	–
Emmett Linton (USA)	–	5	8
Fernando Vargas (USA)	–	8	–
Hector Camacho (PR)	–	9	–
Pedro Ortega (MEX)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Earnie Artango (AUSTRL)	28	–	3
Carl Daniels (USA)	–	–	5
Winky Wright (USA)	–	–	7
Sergio Luciano (BRA)	–	–	10

WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Oscar De La Hoya (USA)	C	–	–
James Page (USA)	–	C	–
Felix Trinidad (PR)	–	–	C
Derrell Coley (USA)	1	4	5
Ike Quartey (GHA)	2	3	–
Jose Luis Lopez (MEX)	3	1	–
Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)	4	6	11
Nicolas Cervera (COL)	5	–	–
Wilfredo Rivera (PR)	6	9	–
Maxim Nesterenko (RUS)	7	7	–
Vernon Forrest (USA)	8	–	4
Oba Carr (USA)	9	2	7
Frankie Randall (USA)	10	–	–
Frank Olsen (DEN)	16	5	–
Andrei Pestraiev (RUS)	–	8	–
Jeff Malcolm (AUSTRL)	–	10	–
Vincent Pettway (USA)	–	–	1
Hugo Pineda (COL)	–	–	2
Raul Frank (USA)	–	–	3
Mahenge Zulu (ZAI)	–	–	6
Sam Garr (GA)	–	–	8
Antonio Marqurito (MEX)	–	–	9
Daniel Santos (PR)	13	–	10

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Vacant	C	–	–
Sharmba Mitchell (USA)	–	C	–
Vince Phillips (USA)	–	–	C
Miguel Angel Gonzalez (MEX)	1	7	–

Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)	2	1	–
Julio Cesar Chavez (MEX)	3	8	–
Reggie Green (USA)	4	10	6
Diobelis Hurtado (CUB)	5	–	–
Lawrence Ngobeni (SA)	6	–	–
Justin Rowsell (AUSTRL)	7	–	–
Rafael Ruelas (MEX)	8	–	–
Ismael Chaves (ARG)	9	–	–
Mauro Lucero (MEX)	10	–	–
Virgil McClendon (USA)	–	2	3
Khalid Rahilou (FRA)	11	3	–
Elio Ortiz (VEN)	–	4	12
Juan Coggi (ARG)	–	5	11
Freddy Rojas (CHILE)	20	6	4
Zab Judah (USA)	19	9	2
Terron Millett (USA)	–	–	1
Randall Bailey (USA)	–	–	5
Emanuel Burton (USA)	21	–	7
Alex Carillo (COL)	–	–	8
Hector Lopez (MEX)	15	–	9
Luis Flores (COL)	–	–	10

LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Cesar Bazan (MEX)	C	–	–
Jean-Baptiste Mendy (FRA)	–	C	–
Shane Mosley (USA)	–	–	C
Billy Schwer (GB)	1	4	9
Steve Johnston (USA)	2	–	8
Daomai Sithkodam (THAI)	3	–	–
Genaro Hernandez (USA)	4	–	–
Yong Soo Choi (KOR)	5	–	–
Hiroyuki Sakamoto (JAP)	6	–	–
Rick Yoshimura (JAP)	7	7	–
Lovemore Ndou (SA)	8	–	–
Aldo Rios (ARG)	9	–	–
Israel Cardona (USA)	10	5	1
Alberto Sicurella (ARG)	–	1	–
Santos Rebolledo (VEN)	–	2	–
Orzubek Nazarov (JAP)	–	3	–
Phillip Holiday (SA)	–	6	3
Eduardo Morales (ARG)	–	8	5
Angel Manfredy (USA)	–	9	–
Ivan Robinson (USA)	16	10	2
Leavander Johnson (USA)	–	–	4
Luis Villalata (PERU)	–	–	6
Ben Tackie (GHA)	21	–	7
Sandro Casamonica (ITA)	19	–	10

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Floyd Mayweather (USA)	C	–	–
Takanori Hatakeyama (JAP)	–	C	–
Robert Garcia (USA)	–	–	C
Jesus Chavez (USA)	1	–	–
Goyo Vargas (MEX)	2	–	–
Justin Juuko (UGA)	3	2	6
Santos Rebolledo (VEN)	4	–	–
Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)	5	–	–
Gabriel Ruelas (MEX)	6	–	–
Kengo Nagashima (JAP)	7	10	–
Saul Duran (MEX)	8	–	–
Jorge Barrios (ARG)	9	–	–
Angel Manfredy (USA)	10	–	–
Lakva Sim (MON)	–	1	–
Yong Soo Choi (KOR)	–	3	–
Dennis Holbaek (DEN)	16	4	–
Edson Xuxa Nacimento (BRA)	–	5	–
Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)	–	6	–
Antonio Hernandez (MEX)	–	7	–
Gilbert Serrano (VEN)	–	8	–
Carlos Gerena (PR)	12	9	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Joel Casamayor (CUB)	11	–	3
Amulfo Castillo (USA)	–	–	4
Harold Warren (USA)	–	–	5
Diego Corrales (USA)	–	–	7
Ramon Ledon (CUBA)	–	–	8
Moises Pedroza (COL)	–	–	9
Jaime Rangel (COL)	–	–	10

FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Luisito Espinosa (PHIL)	C	–	–
Antonio Cermeno (VEN)	–	C	–
Manuel Medina (MEX)	–	–	C
Cesar Soto (MEX)	1	1	9
Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)	2	12	–
Paul Ingle (GB)	3	6	4
Derrick Gainer (USA)	4	–	–
Pablo Chacon (ARG)	5	10	–
Takeo Imaoka (JAP)	6	–	–
Injin Chi (KOR)	7	–	–
Carlos Rios (ARG)	8	–	–
Hector Valaquez (MEX)	9	–	–
Dramane Nabaloun (BKF)	10	–	–
Fred Norwood (USA)	–	2	–
Victor Polo (COL)	–	3	1
Frederic Perez (FRA)	–	4	–
Chamopekt Chorchamuang (THAI)	–	5	–
Mbulelo Botile (SA)	–	7	3
Angel Vasquez (PR)	–	8	2
Wilfredo Vazquez (PR)	–	9	–
Jesus Chavez (USA)	–	–	5
Hector Lizarraga (USA)	–	–	6
Steve Robinson (GB)	18	–	7
Tony Wehbee (AUS)	20	–	8
Teofilo Carranza (PER)	–	–	10

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Erik Morales (MEX)	C	–	–
Enrique Sanchez (MEX)	–	C	–
Vuyani Bungu (SA)	–	–	C
Reynante Jamili (PHIL)	1	11	–
Guty Espadas (MEX)	2	8	–
Michael Brodie (GB)	3	5	3
Ariston Clayton (USA)	4	–	6
Jesus Salud (USA)	5	–	–
Kozo Ishii (JAP)	6	–	–
Sergei Devakov (UKR)	7	–	10
Kennedy McKinney (USA)	8	–	–
Sergio Aguila (MEX)	9	–	–
Angel Chacon (PR)	10	–	–
John Johnson (USA)	–	1	4
Yobert Ortega (VEN)	–	2	–
Richard Carrillo (VEN)	–	3	–
Hector Acero-Sanchez (DR)	–	4	–
Bugiarso (INDO)	–	6	–
Serge Poilblan (FRA)	–	7	–
Rafael Del Valle (PR)	–	9	–
Choe Chol Su (KOR)	–	10	–
Victor Llerena (COL)	–	–	1
Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)	11	12	2
Danny Romero (USA)	–	–	5
Salim Medjkoune (FRA)	17	–	7
Jason Pires (USA)	–	–	8
Anell Barotillo (AUSTRL)	22	–	9

BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)	C	–	–
Nana Konadu (GHA)	–	C	–
Tim Austin (USA)	–	–	C
Adan Vargas (MEX)	1	6	8
Dario Azuaga (PAR)	2	–	–
Paul Ayala (USA)	3	3	–
Gerardo Martinez (MEX)	4	5	–
Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)	5	–	–
Cuauhtemoc Gomez (MEX)	6	8	–
John Michael Johnson (USA)	7	–	–
Oscar Garro (ARG)	8	12	–
Hugo Dianzo (MEX)	9	–	–
Jess Maca (PHIL)	10	–	–
Lukhin CP Gym (THAI)	–	1	–
Sahoiu Phaisarn Gym (THA)	–	2	–
Johnny Bredahl (DEN)	16	4	–
Giovanni Andrade (BRA)	–	7	–
Kozo Ishii (KOR)	–	9	–
Johnny Armour (GB)	–	10	4
Jose Mendoza (COL)	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Jesus Perez (COL)	23	–	3
Adrian Kaspari (INDO)	–	–	5
Albert Resilay (INDO)	–	–	6
Bernardo Mendoza (CHI)	–	–	7
Cesar Singo (ECU)	–	–	9
Juan Sanchez (COL)	–	–	10

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
In Joo Cho (KOR)	C	–	–
Satoshi Iida (JAP)	–	C	–
Vacant	–	–	C
Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)	1	–	12
Luis Bolanos (COL)	2	12	–
Joel Luna Zarate (MEX)	3	4	–
Raffy Montalban (PHIL)	4	–	–
Ratanachai Sor Voraphin (THAI)	5	11	2
Akihigo Nago (JAP)	6	10	–
Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)	7	1	–
Jose Rafael Sosa (ARG)	8	–	–
Pone Saengmorokot (THAI)	9	–	–
Keiji Yamaguchi (JAP)	10	–	–
Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)	–	2	–
Veeraphol Sahaprom (THAI)	–	3	–
Julio Gamboa (NIC)	–	5	8
Dario Azuaga (PAR)	–	6	–
Jesus Rojas (VEN)	–	7	–
Felix Machado (VEN)	–	8	11
Takato Toguchi (JAP)	15	9	–
Mark Johnson (USA)	–	–	1
Eric Morel (USA)	11	–	3
Pedro Pena (USA)	23	–	4
Ernesto Briceno (VEN)	–	–	5
Joel Luna Zarate (MEX)	–	–	6
Sombak Singchawan (THAI)	–	–	7
Ubadel Soto (COL)	–	–	9
Evangelo Perez (PAN)	–	–	10

FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Chatchai Sasakul (THAI)	C	–	–
Hugo Soto (ARG)	–	C	–
Vacant	–	–	C
Gabriel Mira (MEX)	1	–	–
David Guerault (FRA)	2	5	1
Alex Ali Baba (GHA)	3	–	–
Oscar Arciniega (MEX)	4	–	–
Alejandro Montiel (MEX)	5	8	–
Manny Pacquiao (PHIL)	6	2	–
Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)	7	–	–
Will Grigsby (USA)	8	7	–
Alfonso Zvenyika (ZIM)	9	–	–
Raul Juarez (MEX)	10	–	–
Leo Gamez (VEN)	–	1	–
Jose Bonilla (VEN)	–	3	–
Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)	–	4	–
Jesper Jensen (DEN)	–	6	–
Gilberto Gonzalez (VEN)	–	9	–
Miguel A. Granados (MEX)	15	10	–
Irene Pacheco (COL)	–	–	2
Ferid Ben Jeddou (TUN)	–	11	3
Yodchingchai Sornthong (THAI)	–	–	4
Yuri Arbachakov (RUS)	–	–	5
Manuel Herrera (USA)	–	–	6
Mike Trejo (USA)	14	–	7
Pedro Alcazar (PAN)	–	–	8
Luis Cox (PER)	–	–	9
Angel Priolo (COL)	–	–	10

JR. FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)	C	–	–
Pichitnoi C. Siriwat (THAI)	–	C	–
Vacant	–	–	C
Yosam Choi (KOR)	1	10	–
Joma Gamboa (PHIL)	2	1	1
Oscar Andrade (MEX)	3	4	–
Phanieng Sasiprabha (THAI)	4	–	–
Edgar Cardenas (MEX)	5	–	–
Gabriel Munoz (MEX)	6	–	–
Hidenobu Honda (JAP)	7	5	–
Ladislao Vazquez (MEX)	8	–	–
Sangik Yang (KOR)	9	–	–
Shiro Yahiro (JAP)	10	–	–
Oswaldo Guerrero (MEX)	–	2	–
Medngon 3K Battery (THAI)	20	3	–
Carlos Murillo (PAN)	–	6	7
Hadao C.P. Gym (THAI)	–	7	–
Pongsaklek Nakornton (THAI)	–	8	–
Panieng Pontarat (THAI)	–	9	–
Ratanapol Sor Vorapin (THAI)	–	–	2
Will Grigsby (USA)	–	–	3
Gill Ikeda (JAP)	–	–	4
Anis Roga (INDO)	–	–	5
Asdrubal Velasquez (COL)	–	–	6
Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)	–	–	8
Pedro Rodriguez (COL)	–	–	9
Manuel Jesus Herrera (DR)	13	–	10

STRAWWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Ricardo Lopez (MEX)	C	–	–
Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)	–	C	–
Zolani Petelo (SA)	–	–	C
Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)	1	12	–
Andy Tabanas (PHIL)	2	10	2
Daniel Reyes (COL)	3	11	3
Yasuo Tokimitsu (JAP)	4	–	–
Luis Lazarte (ARG)	5	–	1
Satoru Abe (JAP)	6	5	–
Ratanapol Sow Voraphin (THAI)	7	–	–
Myung Sup Park (KOR)	8	8	–
Jun Arlos (PHIL)	9	–	–
Lakchai Dechakul (THAI)	10	–	–
Songkram Porpaoin (THAI)	–	1	–
Ronnie Magramo (PHIL)	–	2	–
Jose Garcia (COL)	–	3	11
Rocky Lin (JAP)	–	4	–
Randy Mangubat (PHIL)	–	6	–
Payak Nakornluang (THAI)	11	7	–
Chana Porpaoin (THAI)	–	9	–
Eric Jamili (PHIL)	–	–	4
Mickey Cantwell (GB)	–	–	5
Faisol Akbar (INDO)	–	–	6
Rocky Palma (JAP)	–	–	7
Jose Laureano (PR)	–	–	8
Mongol Chareon (THAI)	–	–	9
Denkaosan Kaowichit (THAI)	–	–	10

CLASSIC

THE RAPE OF SHELBY

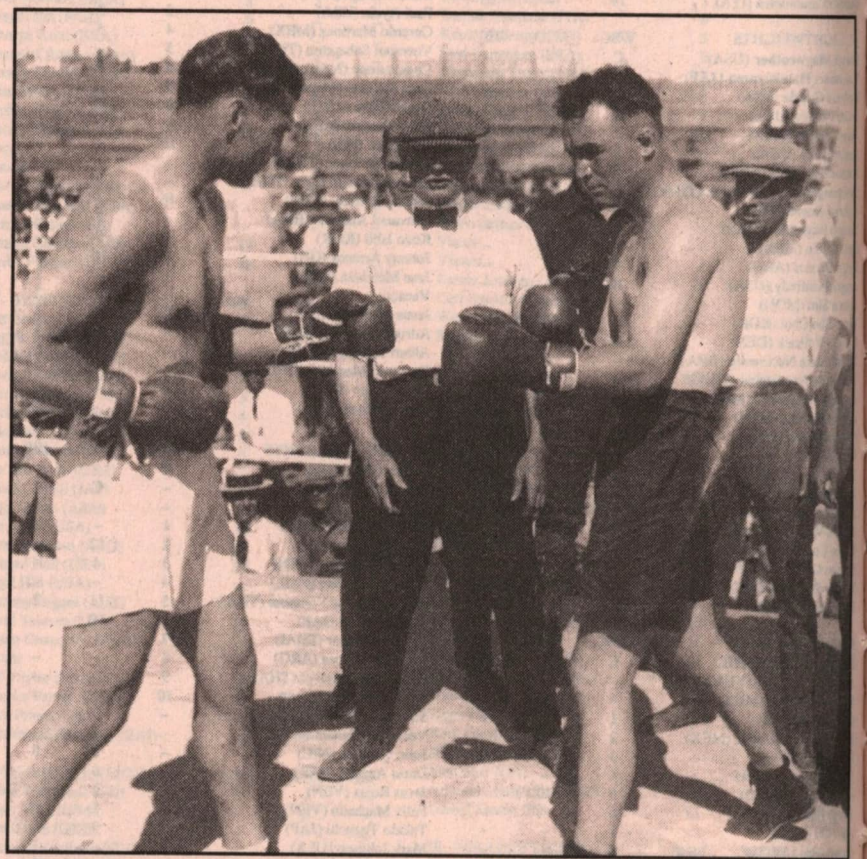
By Meg Bishop

(Editor's Note: This is a condensed version)

On July 4, 1923, a memorable fight between world heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey and unpaid contender Tommy Gibbons was held in Shelby, Montana. Fifty years later, Shelby, still a fly speck on the map of Montana, is celebrating that debacle, which brought financial ruin to that portion of the state. But if Chicago can celebrate its great fire, and San Francisco can pay homage annually to its earthquake and fire, why can't Shelby attempt to "rise like the Phoenix from its ashes?" That fight is known around the world as "The Rape Of Shelby" or "The Great Fiasco."

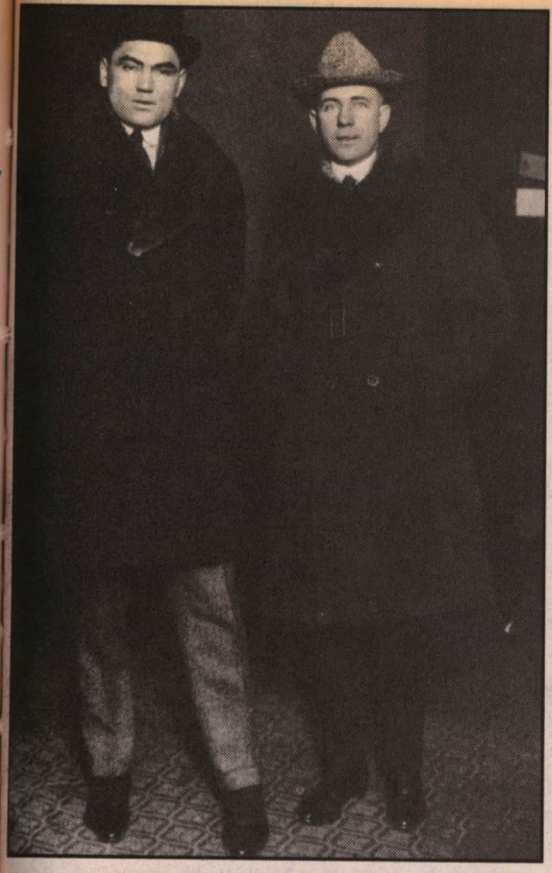
Jack Gilluly, the new editor of the Shelby paper, says, "Many of the facts about the fight will long be argued and disputed. Such was the nature of the event. Shelby's population in 1970 was 3,200 and is continuing to decline. We are experiencing, as are most agricultural areas in the United States, a steady decrease in population."

"The unique historical occasion—the 50th anniversary of the Dempsey-Gibbons heavyweight championship fight—drew



The businessmen of Shelby, Montana, thought they would promote the Dempsey-Gibbons heavyweight title fight to stimulate new interest in business and speculative capital in the Shelby area. Little did they realize the disaster that awaited them.

From THE RING, February 1976



Dempsey's manager, Jack Kearns, standing to the right of the champ, licked his chops over the fresh meat offered by Shelby. Kearns wanted $300,000 paid up front in three installments.

several thousand persons to Shelby," says Cedor B. Aronow, the committee chairman. Who knows, those who ponder the smog and congestion they left behind might have found the thought of settling in a peaceful, friendly, wide open cowtown inviting.

Aronow and Tom Thompson sold stock certificates for $10 apiece to raise money to promote the celebration. The Shelby Post Office has had a special slogan cancellation it is using on all first-class and air mail letters that is a collector's item. A commemorative coin issued by Marias Celebration Inc. was designed by Bob Scriver, internationally known artist from Browning, Montana.

I was a youthful resident of Shelby in 1923; my father, Clint Bishop, was owner-editor of *The Shelby Promoter* newspaper. He invested in and helped promote the fight and publicize the newly discovered Sunburst oil field.

When Dad arrived in Shelby at the urging of his boyhood friend, Loy J. Molumby, formerly of Elkader, Iowa, the population consisted of four or five hundred inhabitants: cowhands, sheepherders, and dirt farmers. The nearest town was Great Falls, 50 miles southwest, with a population of about 20,000.

Shelby was a typical small town, composed of a dusty railroad depot, a collection of dirty windowed stores, a few ramshackle houses, three saloons, and the Hotel Rainbow, which boasted one room with a bath. It was a wide open town, wide open to nature. The Marias River nearby wound toward the site of a vanished fur-trading post on the Missouri.

Life in Shelby was quiet and peaceful, interrupted only when the young left to take part in "The First Great War." Saturday nights and payday were always a bit wild when the cattlemen and cowhands came to town.

This relative calm changed in 1922 when there was an oil strike north of town, known as the Kevin-Sunburst Oil Discovery. With oil speculators, oil field laborers, and opportunists invading, the population doubled overnight. There was great excitement and anticipation that great things were in store for Shelby. The bubble soon burst, however, when the strike ran low, and peace once again descended on the town.

Dad's boyhood friend, Loy Molumby, now state commander of the American Legion, came up with the idea to promote a world heavyweight fight in Shelby to stimulate new interest in business and speculative capital. Molumby, Dad, and other businessmen got together and made grand plans to put Shelby back on the map.

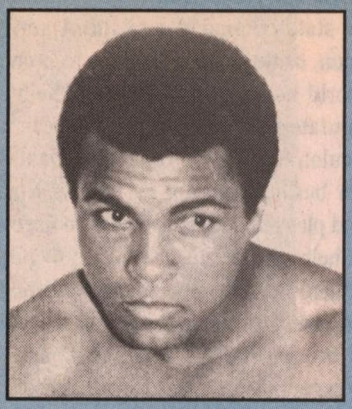
Shelby, he decided, being on the Great Northern Railroad, should not be second in prominence to Great Falls. The oil boom had brought in two new banks, and the townspeople were eager to have things moving again. Jack Dempsey was the reigning heavyweight champ, but had a bit of a stain on his record since he didn't enlist in 1917.

They wanted to match Dempsey with Tommy Gibbons, their favorite, and practically a native from St. Paul. The Twin Cities were the favorite shopping places for those who could afford the trip. They were hoping to "put down Dempsey and put up Shelby."

Molumby was named chairman of the committee of "leading citizens," who wanted to sponsor the fight. Plans were made to secure funds—they realized the amount was enormous since Dempsey had been paid $300,000 for his most recent fight, with Georges Carpentier.

Fans at Times Square in New York City gather as the round-by-round results of the fight are posted and updated. New York promoter Tex Rickard threatened at one point to move the fight to New York City, where it would have been a great attraction.

THE RING RATINGS, February 1976



Muhammad Ali

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Muhammad Ali, Chicago, IL
1. **Ken Norton**, San Diego, CA
2. **Jimmy Young**, Philadelphia, PA
3. **Joe Frazier**, Philadelphia, PA
4. **George Foreman**, Hayward, CA
5. **Ron Lyle**, Denver, CO
6. **Earnie Shavers**, Warren, OH
7. **Duane Bobick**, Bowlus, MN
8. **Joe Bugner**, England
9. **Chuck Wepner**, Bayonne, NJ
10. **Randy Neumann**, Cliffside Park, NJ

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Victor Galindez**, Argentina
2. **John Conteh**, England
3. **Len Hutchins**, Detroit, MI
4. **Richie Kates**, Philadelphia, PA
5. **Tom Bethea**, New York, NY
6. **Bobby Cassidy**, Brentwood, NY
7. **Alvaro Lopez**, Stockton, CA
8. **Jessie Burnett**, Los Angeles, CA
9. **Domenico Adinolfi**, Italy
10. **Mike Corbert**, Portland, OR

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Carlos Monzon, Argentina
1. **Rodrigo Valdez**, Colombia
2. **Gratien Tonna**, France
3. **Vito Antuofermo**, Brooklyn, NY
4. **George Cooper**, Oakland, CA
5. **Tony Licata**, New Orleans, LA
6. **Willie Monroe**, Philadelphia, PA
7. **Bobby Watts**, Philadelphia, PA
8. **Emile Griffith**, New York, NY
9. **Rudy Robles**, Los Angeles, CA
10. **Bennie Briscoe**, Philadelphia, PA

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Jae Do Yuh, South Korea
1. **Elisha Obed**, Bahamas
2. **Miguel de Oliviera**, Brazil
3. **Eckhard Dagge**, Germany
4. **Gene Wells**, Orlando, FL
5. **Mike Baker**, Spartansburg, SC
6. **Koichi Wajima**, Japan
7. **Sandy Torres**, Puerto Rico
8. **Maurice Hope**, England
9. **Miguel Campanino**, Argentina
10. **Perry Abner**, Philadelphia, PA

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Jose Napoles, Mexico
1. **Angel Espada**, Puerto Rico
2. **Armando Muniz**, Los Angeles, CA
3. **Clyde Gray**, Canada
4. **John Stracey**, England
5. **Johnny Gant**, Washington, D.C.
6. **Bruno Arcari**, Italy
7. **Harold Weston**, New York, NY
8. **Fausto Rodriguez**, Domincan Republic
9. **Pete Ranzany**, Sacramento, CA
10. **Tony Petronelli**, Brockton, MA

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Antonio Cervantes, Colombia
1. **Adolph Viruet**, Puerto Rico
2. **Hector Thompson**, Australia
3. **Monroe Brooks**, Los Angeles, CA
4. **Shengsak Muangsurin**, Thailand
5. **Lou Bizzarro**, Erie, PA
6. **Esteban DeJesus**, Puerto Rico
7. **Leonico Ortiz**, Mexico
8. **Cemal Kamaci**, Austria
9. **Nicolino Locche**, Argentina
10. **Carlos Giminez**, Argentina

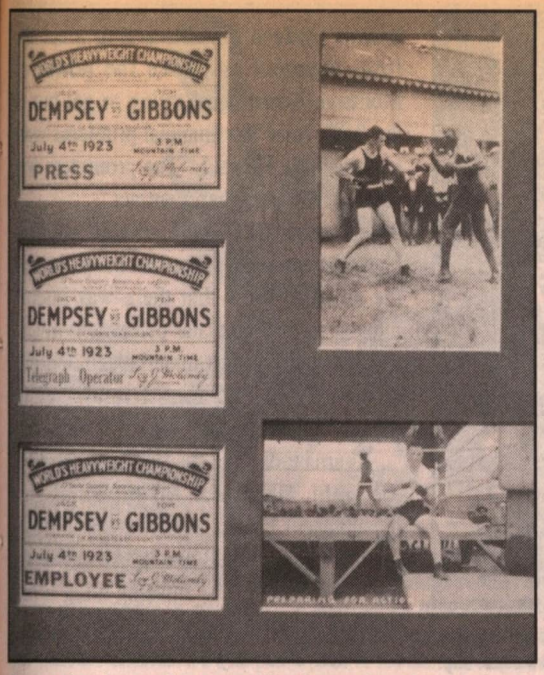
LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Roberto Duran, Panama
1. **Ray Lampkin**, Portland, OR
2. **Angel Mayoral**, Las Vegas
3. **Ishimatsu Suzuki**, Japan
4. **Hector Medina**, Puerto Rico
5. **Buzzsaw Yamabe**, Japan
6. **Rudy Hernandez**, Los Angeles, CA
7. **Vicente Saldivar**, Mexico
8. **Randy Shields**, Los Angeles, CA
9. **Arturo Pineda**, Mexico
10. **Bobby Chacon**, Los Angeles, CA

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Ben Villaflor, Philippines
1. **Tyrone Everett**, Philadelphia, PA
2. **Alfredo Escalera**, Puerto Rico
3. **Sven-Erik Paulsen**, Norway
4. **Samuel Serrano**, Puerto Rico
5. **Hugo Barraza**, Colombia
6. **Ronnie McGarvey**, Mexico
7. **Vilomar Fernandez**, Dominican Republic
8. **Ray Lunny III**, San Francisco, CA
9. **Apollo Yoshio**, Japan
10. **Kuniaki Shibata**, Japan

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Alexis Arguello, Nicaragua
1. **Art Hafey**, Canada
2. **Dave Kotey**, Ghana
3. **Elio Cotina**, Italy
4. **Danny Lopez**, Los Angeles, CA
5. **Lionel Hernandez**, Venezuela
6. **Ruben Olivares**, Mexico
7. **Shig Fukuyama**, Japan
8. **Royal Kobayashi**, Japan
9. **Octavio Gomez**, Mexico
10. **Arnold Taylor**, South Africa

BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Alfonso Zamora, Mexico
1. **Rodolfo Martinez**, Mexico
2. **Carlos Zarate**, Mexico
3. **Eusebio Pedroza**, Panama
4. **Andres Hernandez**, Puerto Rico
5. **Soo Hwan Hong**, South Korea
6. **Thanomjit Sukothai**, Thailand
7. **Paul Ferreri**, Australia
8. **Paddy Maguire**, Ireland
9. **Daniel Troulaire**, France
10. **Gilbert Illueca**, Panama

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Miguel Canto, Mexico
1. **Ignacio Espinal**, Dominican Republic
2. **Betulio Gonzalez**, Venezuela
3. **Erbito Salvarria**, Philippines
4. **Shoji Oguma**, Japan
5. **Alberto Morales**, Mexico
6. **Jamie Rios**, Panama
7. **Luis Estabe**, Venezuela
8. **Franco Sperti**, Italy
9. **Pablo Jiminez**, Dominican Republic
10. **Alfonso Lopez**, Panama



Among the pieces of memorabilia shown above is an authentic press pass in the upper left corner. Shelby wanted to do a first-class job for the visiting press, running special trains from major cities throughout the country.

The state legion and important state fathers got behind the project and Molumby was named go-between to make the initial offer to Jack Kearns, Dempsey's manager. It was the spring of 1923. Molumby reached Kearns by phone at the Morrison Hotel in Chicago. Here is their conversation: "This is Loy J. Molumby. I'm calling you from Shelby, Montana. I am the Montana commander of the American Legion, and I'd like to meet with you concerning a big promotion. There's big money in it."

Kearns licked his chops. This was just his meat—what he was paid for—his job. Kearns said later of this episode, "So began the big buildup for what is known in boxing as 'The Rape Of Shelby,' in which I busted four banks and got even with the state for the Montana bankers who absconded with my father's mining fortune years before."

Molumby continued, "We decided on a heavyweight fight. Would you want to have Dempsey meet Tom Gibbons in Shelby on July 4 for the title?"

Kearns said, "I don't want to go to the wilderness to fight for peanuts. Gibbons is a tough man. We'd have to get paid real well for a bout like that." Molumby replied, "Price is no object." That is where Molumby made his mistake.

The $300,000 Dempsey had received for fighting Carpentier seemed just right to the manager. Kearns named that figure, and Molumby agreed. A contract was drawn up with the first $100,000 to be paid immediately, the second $100,000 60 days before the fight, and the final payment five days before the fight.

Molumby joined Kearns in New York to make the first $100,000 payment. Kearns reached fast for the money saying, "I want it clearly understood in the event of failure on your part to come up with the money as specified, this contract will be null and void—all monies will be forfeited and there will be no obligation on the part of myself or the fighter." Molumby agreed to these terms. He then proceeded to work out final details with Eddie Kane, Tommy Gibbons' manager.

Gibbons and Kane were not as greedy; in fact, Tommy was so eager to fight Dempsey that he would almost have done it for nothing. Kane wanted to have Mike Collins, the fight promoter from Minneapolis, as the referee, but Kearns insisted on Jimmy Dougherty from New York, his own territory. Kearns knew Dougherty would make certain that Dempsey "got none the worse of it way out in the wild and woolly West," where Gibbons was considered practically a hometown boy.

While Shelby plotted and planned and scraped all the money in sight for the big event—nobody in the East thought the fight would actually come off— information leaked out that the Shelby committee under Molumby was running into serious financial difficulties.

Mike Collins, the Minneapolis promoter, was persuaded to take over promotion of the fight with Molumby. He was in charge of seeing that tickets were distributed on time and was to oversee the building of the huge wooden stadium on the prairie, to seat 40,000.

Kearns knew that if that cowtown in the middle of nowhere could draw much more money than the $300,000 that was promised him, he'd be the most surprised guy in the world. Dempsey called it the most fouled-up promotion of his life. It wasn't too long after that that he got a new promoter.

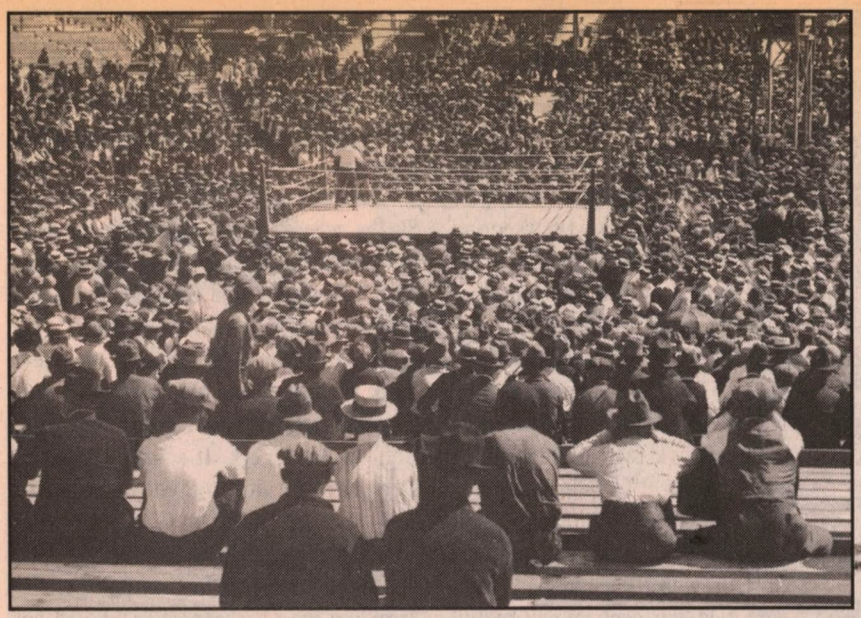
Dempsey said, "The honest slobs of Shelby, who were now pulled into the deal, just couldn't come up with the second payment." Dempsey told Kearns, "If I don't get the money, I'm not going to fight."

He got hold of Tex Rickard, the New York promoter, and told him what was happening. Rickard threatened to move the fight to New York. It sounded great to Dempsey, but not to Shelby. They had booked a fight and, by God, they were going to hold one. The promoters tapped the local American Legion and put the "arm" on the storekeepers again, and got up the second $100,000. "You are going to fight in Shelby," Molumby said, "or you aren't going to fight anywhere else." They were desperate.

Collins and Molumby went to Chicago to make final plans for the fight with Kearns, and then back to Montana to start work on the arena.

Plans were made to run special trains from New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Minneapolis, and from as far

Tommy Gibbons was a colorless man, but a tough fighter. Though he hailed from St. Paul, Minnesota, Gibbons was adopted by the Shelby crowd as their champion against Dempsey, who was perceived as a draft-dodger.



Thousands of people were milling around outside shouting epithets at Dempsey and demanding, "We'll come in for $10." The fight failed to lure the large crowd the people of Shelby were expecting.

West as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland, Tacoma, Seattle, and Spokane.

To make sure they would receive their final payment, Kearns and Dempsey left for Shelby on May 16 in their private railroad car. Kearns later said, "It was everything I had been told. A citizens committee greeted us when we arrived in Shelby, and presided over a fly-infested luncheon at the Hotel Rainbow, at which most of those in attendance wore boots and pistols."

Kearns told them, "We expect a tremendous fight. I think Gibbons is the best boxer in the world, but I am quite hopeful that Dempsey will retain the title. I would not be surprised if the winner of this contest fought Harry Wills right here, in Shelby, on Labor Day. Shelby is in a position to become the fight capital of the nation."

The local bigwigs were eating it up. "We have come here at something of a sacrifice," he continued, "we were offered a half-million dollars for the same fight in New York. However Shelby spoke first, and Shelby wins out."

Dempsey and Kearns stayed in Shelby only one night because there was only one place to go when the sun went down—the King Tut dance hall, one flight up over a grocery store. Dempsey's training camp was set up in Great Falls. Kearns rented a roadhouse with its own bar and dance hall. Dempsey greased his face daily with bear grease and had a timber wolf as a mascot.

Gibbons and his wife and children lived in a house in Shelby, on the "naked" plain near the arena. The townspeople saw Gibbons every day, and he became the favorite. Gibbons was a polite and colorless man. He was six years older than Dempsey, and was considered a real tough fighter.

Dad reported on the meeting of Kearns and Mayor Johnson of Shelby for the final payment. There wasn't 25 cents left in town or anywhere in the whole area. "We're having a little difficulty coming up with the final $100,000. Would you consider taking 50,000 head of sheep in place of the money?" said Johnson.

Kearns looked amazed and said, "Now what the hell would I do with 50,000 sheep in a New York apartment? Just let them get up the money or there won't be any fight."

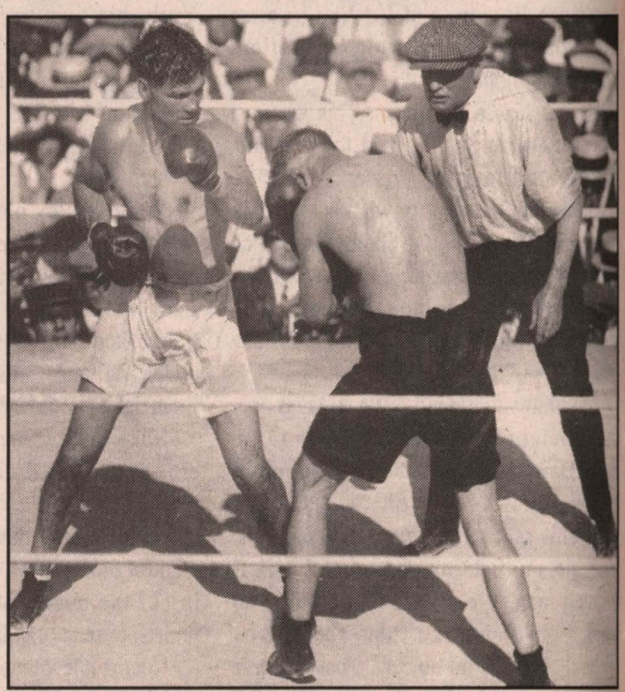
Frank Walker, a lawyer from Butte, said, "Here in Montana, we have trees on which to hang fellows like you." Twenty lifelong friends pledged $5,000 each to meet the final payment and save the honor of Montana. Kearns kept trying to get out of the fight, since the financial problems were so fouled up. He said, "The promoters will have to live up to their contract."

Although there were enough automobiles and carriages parked on the plain near the arena to show that there was intense interest in the fight, the permanent migration to Shelby hadn't materialized. On July 2, only eight "lifelong friends" came though with the $5,000.

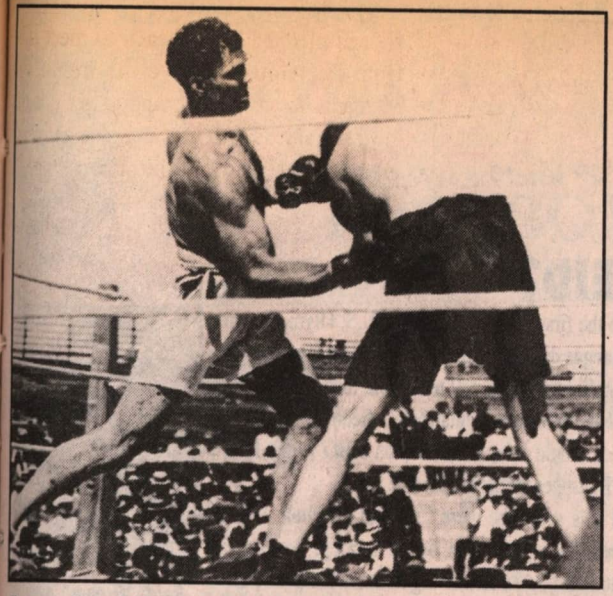
Kearns took over the final promotion of the fight. He said, "All the final gate receipts will be left in my hands until we get our final hundred grand." He never got the full payment. The amazing thing is that they got as much as they did.

When Dempsey left for the arena, the crowd surrounded him. He was pushed, with his bodyguards against the stadium door for almost half an hour. Thousands of people were milling around outside shouting epithets at Dempsey and demanding, "$10, we'll come in for $10."

The tickets were stamped from $20 to $50, and the Treasury Department was on hand to make sure the right tax was paid. Kearns told the Chief Internal Revenue Service Collector it was going to be good for the government. The IRS man agreed.



Even when Dempsey was connecting, the fans still cheered wildly for Gibbons, who took the first few rounds.



Dempsey's bodyblows started taking their toll on Gibbons, who became fatigued as the fight progressed. Eventually, Dempsey won a hard-fought 15-round decision, but the event almost led to the financial ruin of Shelby.

While the Montana Elks band played on one side of the ring, Kearns began selling tickets for $10. Those inside who had paid the full price made a stampede for the ringside seats. Dempsey got into the arena at 3:36 p.m. Gibbons had been inside for some time, waiting for his opponent to appear.

Kearns called it a "lousy fight." The crowd was with Gibbons. Every time he hit Dempsey or Dempsey missed Tommy, the crowd whooped and hollered for Tommy. Gibbons took a few of the early rounds, before Dempsey's bodypunches began to slow him down. Dempsey made it his fight from the sixth round on and won a 15-round decision. Dempsey proved he was more than a slugger. "Don't let anyone tell you Dempsey can't box," the battered Gibbons said.

Kearns was taking in about $80,000, but he had to give the government $8,000. He was left with $72,000 in cash. He overheard one of the Revenue men say, "The Chief is talking about demanding tax on the face value of the tickets."

That would mean every cent Kearns had collected from the gate. He made the Chief believe there was no hurry on his decision. "I'm going to deposit the money in the bank. Then I'd like to get together with you fellows and have a couple of drinks."

The Chief watched Kearns cross the street and enter the bank building, but he kept right on going, out the back door and up the alley to the depot. Kearns talked the trainmaster into hooking an engine to a caboose and running down to Great Falls for $500.

The money was in a tin trunk with two bodyguards sitting on it in a day coach up ahead. Only one bystander recognized them. "Don't hurry back," he called. "Don't worry, we won't," said Kearns. "We have seen the last of Montana." But Montana hasn't heard the last of the fight. Two Shelby banks plus one in Great Falls and one in Joplin all closed as a result of the fight, and Mayor Jimmy Johnson, who personally lost $150,000, said, "Well boys, we saw a good fight—who'll slip me the price of a shave?" ■

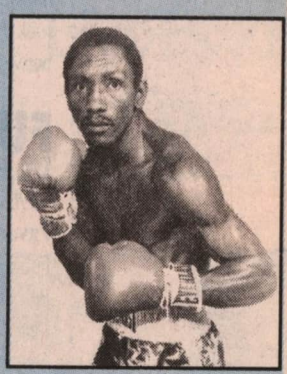
THE RING, February 1976

The Cover: THE RING took a look at the world champions considered the best pound-for-pound fighters in the world. At the time, there was no question the best was heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali, who defended the title five times in '75, including his 14-round kayo of Joe Frazier in "The Thrilla In Manila."

No Longer The Mecca Of Boxing: Pictured is the second Madison Square Garden, which was considered the mecca of boxing during the early-1900s. But the third Garden was fighting for its fistic life by the mid-1970s.

Farewell To The Orchid Man: THE RING paid a tribute to French boxer Georges Carpentier (shown after losing a light heavyweight title bout to Battling Siki in 1922) after his death in Paris at the age of 81. Carpentier had the distinction of fighting in every class from bantam to heavyweight.

Bonavena Returns: Former heavyweight contender Oscar Bonavena made a triumphant return to the ring after a lengthy layoff, turning back Raul Gorosito by 10-round decision in November of '75. Bonavena, a heavyweight contender in the late-'60s and early-'70s, had taken almost a year off from boxing.

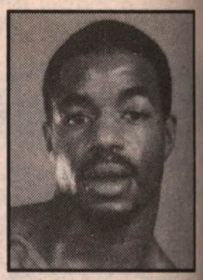


Fighter Of The Month: Junior welterweight Antonio Cervantes was selected for THE RING's monthly honor for his seven-round knockout of Hector Thompson in Panama City. The Colombian pelted the smaller Thompson with a long left jab the entire fight until Thompson failed to answer the bell for the eighth.

LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

MORE GOLD FOR REID?



Reid: "Dream" may come true in March

In October '98, **Floyd Mayweather Jr.** became the first member of the '96 U.S. Olympic team to win a professional world title. Then **Fernando Vargas** did it two months later. Now **David Reid**, the only member of that Olympic squad to capture gold in Atlanta, will try to join them, as he has a shot at WBA junior middleweight champion **Laurent Boudouani** tentatively scheduled for March 6. The bout, which wasn't yet signed at press time, should be a co-feature on HBO to the long-delayed **Kostya Tszyu-Miguel Angel Gonzalez** WBC super welterweight title fight.

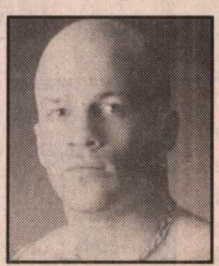
"Boudouani's a comer, he throws punches and he's gonna be there," said **Al Mitchell**, Reid's trainer and adviser since the start of his amateur career. "He's wide open, but he's strong. But Dave's strong, too, and he's got all that amateur experience to make up for not having as many pro fights."

As was the case with Mayweather and Vargas, that lack of professional experience alluded to by Mitchell will no doubt cause skeptics to suggest Reid is being rushed into this bout with 32-year-old veteran Boudouani, 38-2-1 (32), who has held the WBA title since August of '96. But Mitchell believes Reid is every bit as ready as his Olympic teammates were when they overwhelmed proven champions, and the key will be the quality of opposition making up his skimpy 11-0 (7) record.

"I've been putting Dave against guys who don't quit, some undefeated guys who never lost, because it doesn't prove anything to beat a guy who's used to losing and isn't going to challenge you," Mitchell said. "I thought Vargas looked great against **Yory Boy Campas**, but Campas is a guy who had quit before [against **Jose Luis Lopez** in '96], and he was beaten before the fight with Vargas even started. Losing and quitting can become habits, but Dave has fought guys who have come to win."

LISTEN UP

After leaving the rowdy Atlantic City crowd unsatisfied in his October '98 fight with **Wayne McCullough**, featherweight **"Prince" Naseem Hamed** will most likely be returning to the friendlier confines of his native England for his next fight, set for April. No opponent had been named as of press time ... A somewhat important, evenly matched heavyweight bout will headline an HBO card on February 27, as **Lou Savarese** and **Shannon Briggs** square off to determine the likely next opponent of **Mike Tyson**. Both are ideal for facing Iron Mike, as each man's marquee value seems to exceed his actual capabilities. Savarese rose to prominence in high-profile bouts with **George Foreman** and **Buster Douglas**, while Briggs became a name by managing a disputed win over Foreman and losing to **Lennox Lewis**. Neither man has cleanly beaten a prime fighter of note, but both punch hard and should produce solid pay-per-view sales against Tyson. On the undercard of the Savarese-Briggs show, IBF light heavyweight champion **Reggie Johnson** will finally defend against mandatory challenger **Will Taylor** ... Where does **Angel Manfredy** go next, following his devastating second-round kayo loss to **Floyd Mayweather Jr.**? Back to HBO, according to **Lou DiBella**. The HBO Sports Vice President indicated that "El Diablo's" comeback fight would probably be a *Boxing After Dark* co-feature, perhaps against the fighter Manfredy barely beat in a sizzler last September, **John Brown**. If Manfredy gets by Brown again, look for him to get another crack at a title later in the year against the winner of the January IBF 130-pound title fight between **Roberto Garcia** and **John-John Molina**.



Manfredy: A chance to bounce back

FUTURE FIGHTS

By Art Manteris

VP/Director of Race and Sports Operations Las Vegas Hilton SuperBook

Favorite	Underdog	Odds	The Skinny
Felix Trinidad	James Page	5-1	Page is good, but not this good
Felix Trinidad	Vince Phillips	10-1	Recent reports on Phillips aren't good
Shane Mosley	Ivan Robinson	8-1	Mosley unbeatable at 135 pounds
Johnny Tapia	Tim Austin	Pick-'em	Great, great fight!
Stevie Johnston	Cesar Bazan	Pick-'em	Johnston may have edge this time

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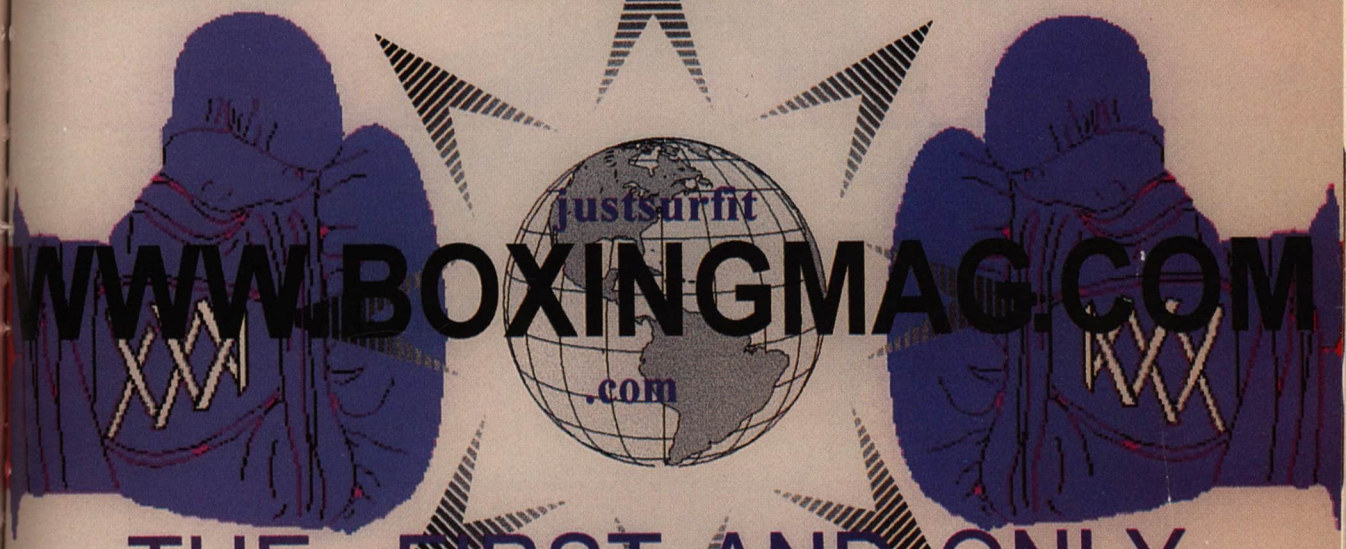

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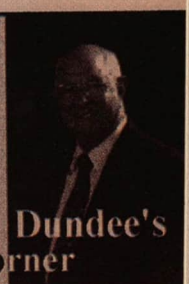

Angelo Dundee's Corner

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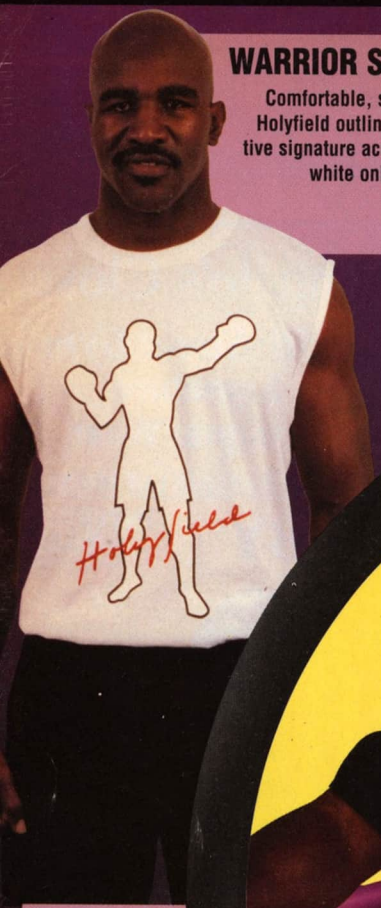

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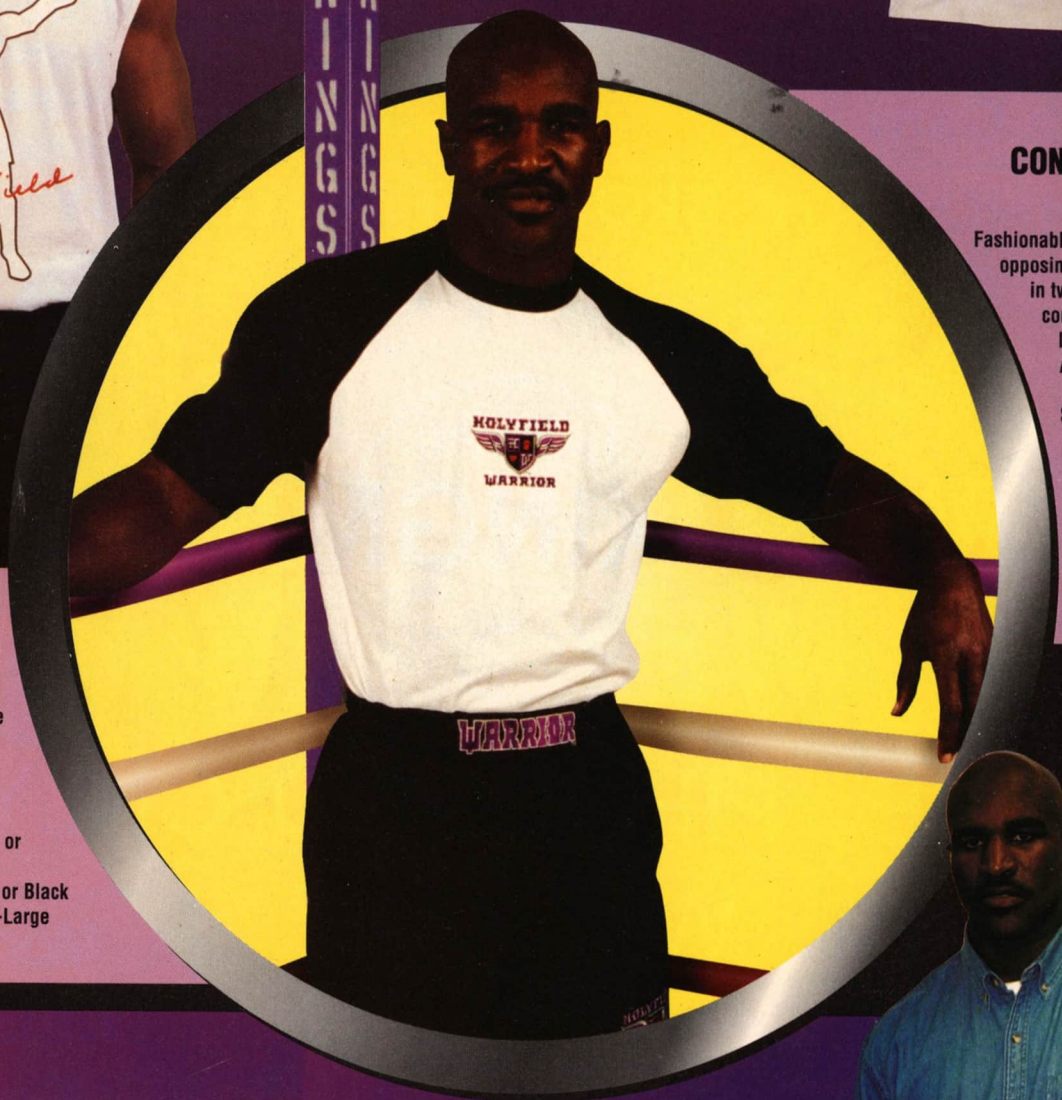

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